

# Petzel

Saim Demircan, "Simon Denny," *Map* #25, Summer 2011.

## SIMON DENNY

20 MARCH–1 MAY

NEUER AACHENER KUNSTVEREIN, AACHEN



"3D Chroming Factory Walkthrough", 2011, mixed media

For a recent generation of artists, the accelerated advances in technology present an opportunity to question the validity of those they have grown-up using. Simon Denny seems particularly interested in the redundancy of technological forms, and the advent of new consumer hardware on the marketplace. As such, the artist chooses his mediums in conjunction with an awareness of the increasingly alternative platforms for viewing the moving image, which simultaneously replace and force these customary formats to update themselves.

The title of Denny's solo exhibition *Cruise Line* refers to a fleet of passenger ships owned by Disney. While including several pieces that rework motifs from his practice (namely, aquariums and televisions), *Cruise Line* perhaps represents a change of direction for

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Denny. Or could it be that conceptually-speaking the 'cruise' is in fact entirely in keeping with the artist's previous subject matter; both his works and the Disney ships are after all vessels that engage and depend on passive participation?

Rather than focus on the expectations such an enterprise might offer—corporate hyper-reality, package holidaymaking, the cruise ship as gambling haven—Denny adopts a more prosaic and specifically materialistic approach. '3D Chroming Factory Walkthrough', 2011, is both a video and a composition of the equipment Denny used. An LCD TV, still in its clear plastic cover, plays video footage (complete with default muzak), recorded by Denny on a commercially available 3D video camera. His distinctly amateurish footage captures the workshop of a company in Aachen that implemented the chrome finishing of the metal fittings on board the most recent Disney cruise ship. This can be viewed with 3D glasses leaning on the nearby 'Viewing Rail', 2011, a freestanding metal frame that runs down the centre of the gallery. The 3D effect, however, does little to enhance the imagery of the workplace that it documents, suggesting that Denny purposefully uses the technology purely as a display of the latest video capture format. In this respect, the video demonstrates that the quality of even the most mundane footage cannot be bolstered by rudimentary 3D treatment, therefore disclosing its function as a market-led product. Yet, Denny also appears genuinely interested in the application of 3D technology, adding another layer to his video-cum-sculpture, which problematises the conditions of its reception as three-dimensional object, moving image and emulation of real space.

Various pieces of wire, metal shards and solder—discarded materials from the chroming workshop—hang from a wall bracket directly behind the aforementioned work, and are collectively titled 'Wall Mounted Chroming Byproducts', 2011. As if to prove these objects functionality, on the other side of the gallery an unexceptional length of steel, also from the workshop, with a half-finished brass-coating, sits modestly on an empty LCD TV box, far outweighing the minimal sculptural form on top of it.

Aestheticising the production line, via the display of amorphous tools and an un-monumental piece of metal, Denny's metallic surfaces appear to be the bedrock of this project. Chroming replenishes the idea of the labour-intensive art object; a process that aims to reach a perfect

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veneer or mirror-shine, representing the potential for an infinite surface. '3D Chroming Factory Walkthrough' is a continuation of virtual space that extends into real space.

The exhibition continues upstairs (as does the muzak), dubbed the 'upper deck', where a rope handrail installed around the walls demarcates the room. This decoration partially covers a series of digital prints and also encloses a final LCD TV showing the chroming firm's promotional video on repeat. As with the freestanding 'Viewing Rail', Denny uses this spatial intervention as a device to riff off the other work in the show (rather than necessarily offering physical support for the visitor), while managing to eschew any potentially misapplied critique of the exhibition space.

Denny appears comfortable with the material he uses to produce his hybrid artworks, which all incorporate their own entropic values. The economy of his practice is also a defining characteristic; materials such as textured aluminium, towels and TV casings reoccur, and the traditional plinth is sometimes replaced with packaging material, a swivel chair or table base. Present in such strategies is the potential risk of 're-packaging' artwork, which also consciously updates or renews itself. Yet *Cruise Line* nonetheless underlines the artist's maturity in taking fresh ideas forward while re-evaluating past work against shifting cultural forms.

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<http://mapmagazine.co.uk/9620/simon-denny/>