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Iris Khan

Do you go through a selection process to find your material, or does it find you?
I've said in the past that I feel I am summoned to a particular book or piece of music. A lot of things that I choose to make work from have a certain place in the history of art, music and religion but also in my own upbringing. If I'm introduced to something, like a piece of music or a particular book, and I get obsessed by it in a certain way, then I become compelled to make a piece from it.

Are you obsessive about images?
I'm not sure if I'm obsessive about images as a whole or more obsessed by images as transitory moments of time. I'm obsessed by the idea of slicing away time and making images transparent, making them a trace. But I can also be detached about images. In the photography, only recordings melancholic, unimportant moments, but for me it's what these moments can become; to not just exist as singular memory but as a compression of a passage of time that reveals something about the true nature of photography... its surface.

It has been written that you "distill the meaning" of complex works, like Turner's oil paintings. Is this your intention?
I like that word "distill". If you mean do I try and grasp the essence of a particular work, look about with it on the computer and then display all the essence of a complete work on the wall, then that's exactly what I try to do.

Which theorists and philosophers who influence your work?
I have a friend and a lot of people who have written critical writing that he could never create something freely because he was always searching for answers from other thinkers' minds. Sometimes one should put the books down and just go with what one knows best. Or better still, just make art from the books you read that influence you. For me it's Freud, Nietzsche, Sartre, Badiou and Al-Hammad.

Spiral Gasholders... An Homage to Bernd Becher (2003), digital bromide print, 61 x 50.8 cm
Friedrich Nietzsche... Thus Spake Zarathustra (2003). Digital C-print mounted on aluminum, 177.8 x 285.7 cm
Sigmund Freud's "The Uncanny" (2006), digital C-print mounted on aluminum, 177.8 x 213.5 cm