

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

KRIS MORTENSEN
mirror mirror

February 20 - March 26, 2016
Opening Reception:
February 20, 2016, 7-9pm

(Chicago - January 25, 2016)

Stuart & Co. Gallery is pleased to announce *mirror mirror*, an exhibition of new works by Kris Mortensen. Playing into fascinations with perception and selfhood in the digital age, Mortensen addresses the question of how identity is formed through the deconstruction and reconstruction of massive quantities of information, imagery, and sensory perceptions to place ourselves within the context of society at large. As she states, “How do we construct ourselves without reflecting our surroundings?”

Mortensen’s assertion is solidified in her use of a vast number of uniformly-sized and singularly-focused renderings that are also infused into larger-scale compositions that transform their materiality and meaning. The effect is that of a Google Image search complete with various affiliations and indexing loosely bound together by a common thread allowing one to ingest, internalize, and reconstitute external surroundings. Likewise, in the titling of her works with hashtags and digital file formats, Mortensen calls into question the influence of ubiquitous imagery and the attempt to quantify and categorize nearly every aspect of our lives.

The palindromic show title cleverly illustrates the act of reflection itself and overtly references *The Talking Mirror* thereby delving into topics such as identity, desire, and truth. Just as *The Talking Mirror* brings an unabashed clarity to both viewer and environment, Mortensen spotlights hidden ideologies in visual images which allude to traditional Western cultural aesthetics and the construction of desire implicit in our everyday surroundings.

Works such as *6.2A ES Tangerine, apricot, carrot/experiment with floral design* in which the viewer takes on the personae of a nude woman gazing at herself from the torso down further illustrate this notion. Similarly, *8.0A Vertigo still in red, orange, rouge bengale fluorescent* depicts a still from Alfred Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* in which the female lead realizes that the man she is embracing is not in love with her but rather with a figment of his imagination that he has crafted her into becoming. Mortensen further

develops this concept by turning the notion of a mirror back onto itself through the presentation of blackened mirrors as the subject matter in *2.2A mirror: Soft Black/chalkboard paint/red accents/yellow halo* and *2.0B mirror: Soft black chalkboard/with drip*. The lack of reflection challenges the viewer to contemplate their own identities and the act of looking itself while suggesting that perceptions can be bent and reinvented.

Many of these same focused images can be found reconstituted in larger-scale pieces such as *Counter* which presents a slideshow-like rendition of a subset of the smaller studies that calls to mind the detached act of scrolling through information in mass quantities. In a similar fashion, *Right Side/Interior View/Baba Yaga's House* and *Left Side/Interior View/Baba Yaga's House* are infused with reinterpretations of other pieces in the exhibition as well as mirroring the three worlds in which the painting has, or will have, lived: Mortensen's studio, Mortensen's house, and the gallery where they are to be shown.

The cyclical and repetitive nature of Mortensen's selected works and compositions makes evident the formation of new meaning based upon juxtaposition of objects to one another as well as to their environments in the same manner that reflections allow us to create new meaning about ourselves. Just as T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* conjures a vast and dissonant range of cultures and literatures with constant shifts between speakers and scenes, Mortensen presents us with a seemingly disjointed world and an intentional breakdown of structure in order to comment on our fragmented and interwoven realities.

Mortensen attended the Ottawa School of Art before pursuing her BFA at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston and Tufts University. In 2012 Mortensen began pursuit of a Masters of Fine Art in Painting and Drawing at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago during which time she worked as the Installation Director of the Student Union Galleries and Teacher's Assistant in the Painting and Drawing Department. Mortensen has also held various internships at the Harvard Fogg Museum, the Institute of Contemporary Art, and the Cambridge Arts Council as well as becoming the recipient of the Dana Pond Award and the prestigious Traveling Scholars Fellowship. She is currently living and working in Providence, RI.

Maintaining a contemporary vision, Stuart & Co. Gallery strives to represent emerging and mid-career artists at the forefront of expression.

Since its inception in 2012, Stuart & Co. Gallery has been home to innovative, pioneering exhibitions across a multitude of media and genres. The gallery embraces multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and cross-genre art forms in addition to traditional practices.

Please join Stuart & Co. Gallery for the opening reception of *mirror mirror* on Saturday, February 20th, 2016, from 7-9pm.

For more information, please contact Britney Lipton at (312) 487-1850 or via email at britney.lipton@stuartandco.com.