

Oliver Durcan // Artist Statement

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The main body of my work consists of oil paintings that realistically render objects, photographs and screenshots found in art settings and in popular culture. They are 'replicas', produced with an intentionally robotic, engineered approach and a more photographic outcome than a painterly one. Adjacent to these paintings, my printed media artworks and curatorial activities (with IKO) contribute to the exploration of two main conceptual intentions within my practice:

A

To explore the function and purpose of **P**ainting when it is used as a disguising tool to mimic and replicate.

B

To look at the behaviour of painting and the lifestyle of the painter who is contained within a multi-tasked, distracted contemporary culture.

Since 2015, my paintings have used tromp l'oeil effects, rendered in a way that folds our perception of their three-dimensionality. My Relic paintings focus heavily on this, taking the task of wrapping an artwork (which is a fast, utilitarian process) and replicating it with engineered painting techniques (a slow, concentrated and deliberate process). What an unusual activity to dedicate prolonged periods of time to create a single painting when today, we have more familiarly with a multitasking, time slicing lifestyle. The recent rise of 'the attention economy' (the treating of human attention as a scarce commodity) puts paintings that demand audience engagement and time to be made in an awkward spot. But can a painting be the vehicle to make one question this speedy behaviour that we're rapidly adopting?

From wrapped paintings found in studio storage to default images found on laptop desktops, the imagery in my work is often taken from the ambient background of contemporary culture, using painting (and **P**ainting) as a means to bring it to the foreground. The subjects, previously invisible due to their saturated repetition in popular culture, present themselves with the aura of the one-of-a-kind. I'm interested in how this new status and build skews something from its original context, how being a painting can activate references to art history or introduce cultural critique. Objects are more subject to a chain of questioning when they sit in the uncanny valley; when they are caught trying to disguise their differences.

'The Beat Goes On', 2017 is an example of my work that isn't a painting but is 'about' **P**ainting. **P**ainting and its mystique are flattened when turned into a manufactured task under an IKEA logo. Instructing users to make paintings in a continuous loop, it continues to highlight a mass familiarity with branding and the behaviour that that brand dictates. Since 2017, this dystopian manual acts as a reference point for the faux-naïve decisions in my practice; painting images from popular culture as opposed to choosing my own, rendering pictures that are consumed on repeat within a contemporary lifestyle and consciously eliminating signs of gesture or character in the production of my work.