

# Cool Vanilla

# **Stephen Kent**

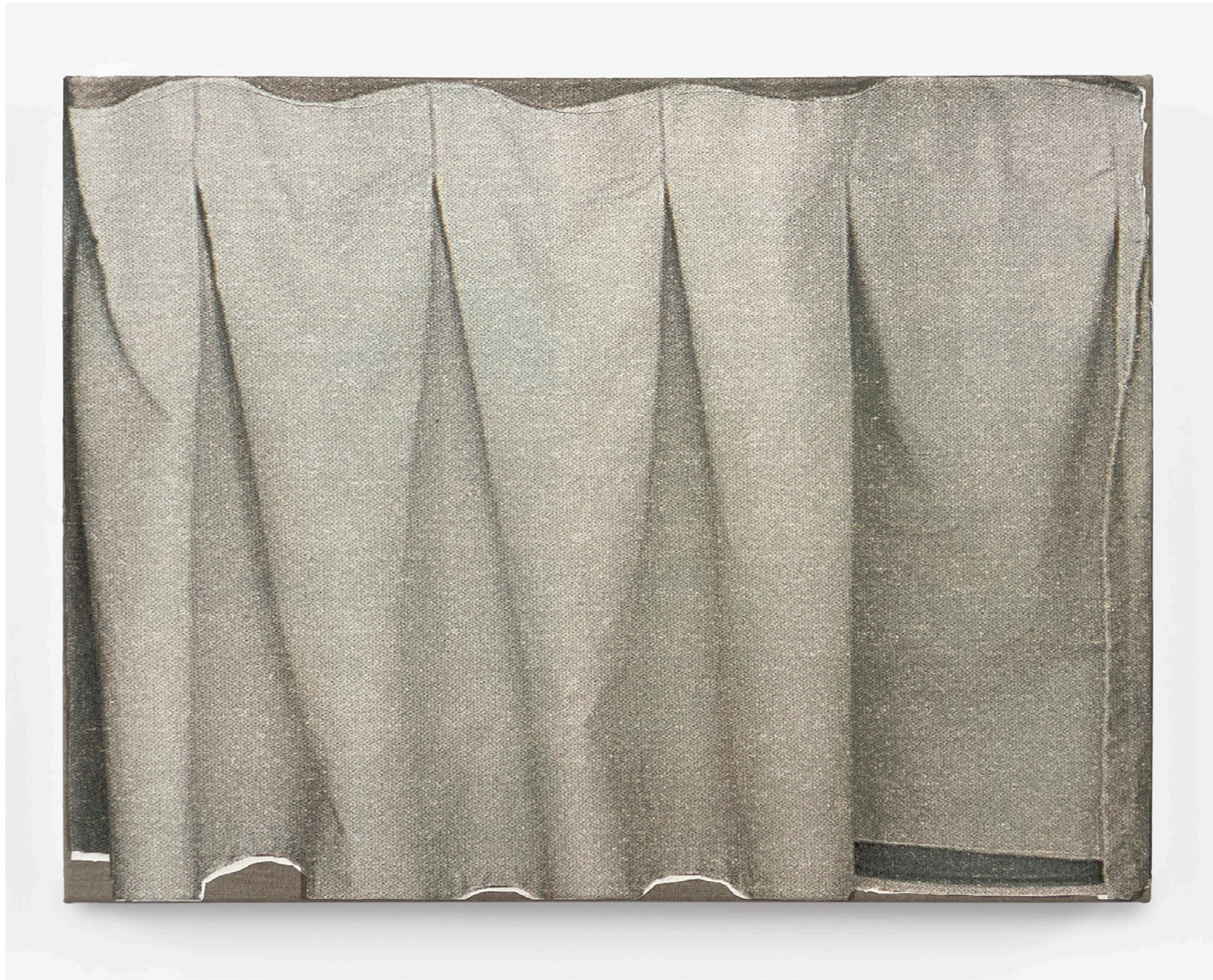
Solo Exhibition by  
**Stephen Kent**

14th Nov –  
13th Dec, 2025

Opening Friday,  
14th Nov, 5–8 pm

Marienstrasse 35  
40210 Düsseldorf  
Germany





A Gentle Reminder  
2025  
UV Print on Gesso on Linen  
45 × 60 cm





Today a Brook,  
Tomorrow a Desert  
2025  
UV Print on Gesso on Linen  
145 × 200 cm





Cool Vanilla  
2025  
UV Print on Aluminium,  
Glas, Naturstein, Beton  
30 × 25 cm



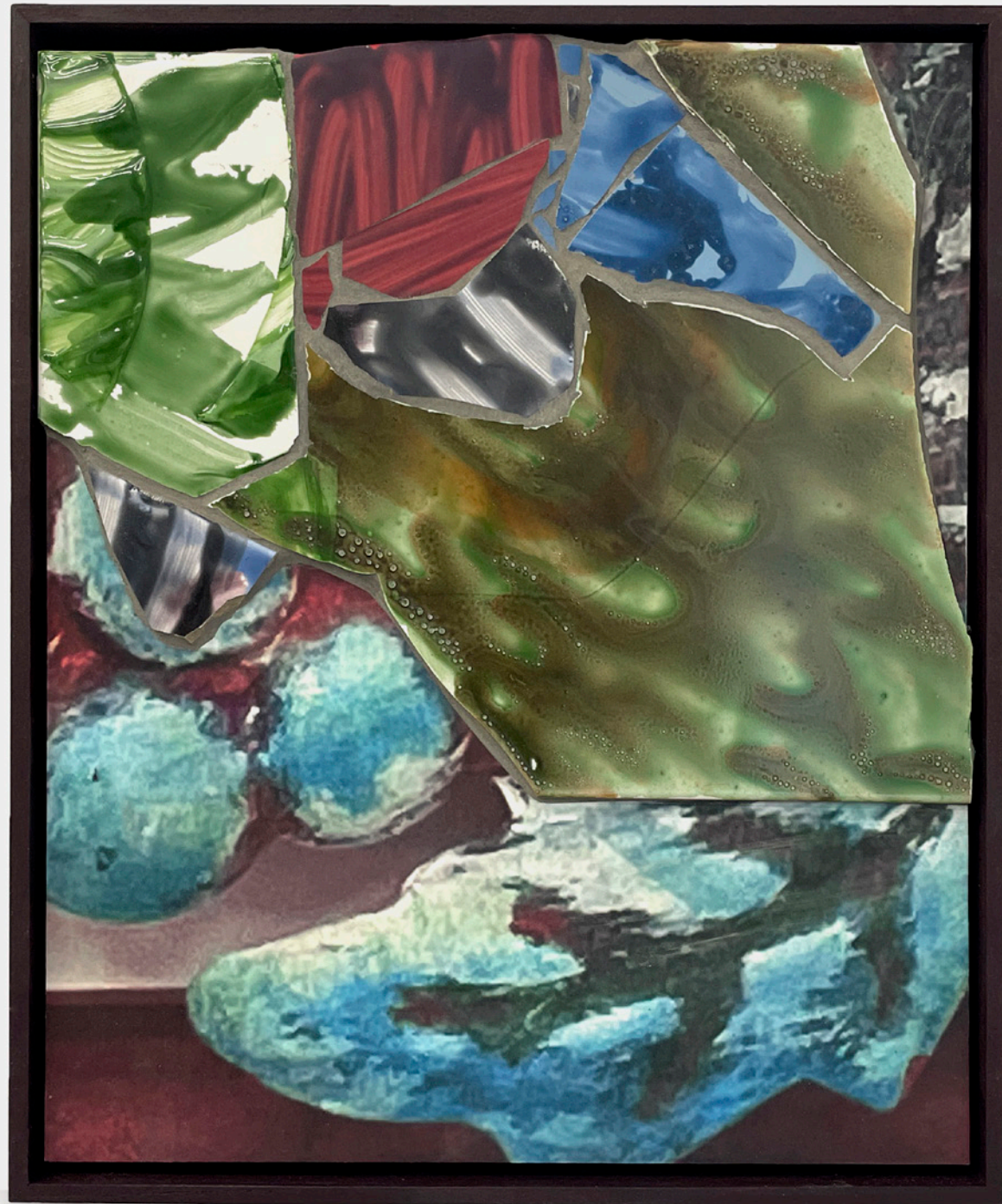






Notes on Nothingness  
2025  
UV Print on Gesso on Linen  
120 × 95 cm





Daily Etude (Foliage)  
2024

UV Print on Alu-Dibond,  
Hand glazed and found tiles,  
Cement on wooden panel,  
Artis frame  
30 × 25 cm





Simple Pleasures  
2025  
UV Print on Gesso on Linen  
140 × 180 cm





Belts  
2023  
UV Print on Alu-Dibond,  
Tile, Natural stones, cement,  
wooden panel, artist frame  
52 × 70 cm









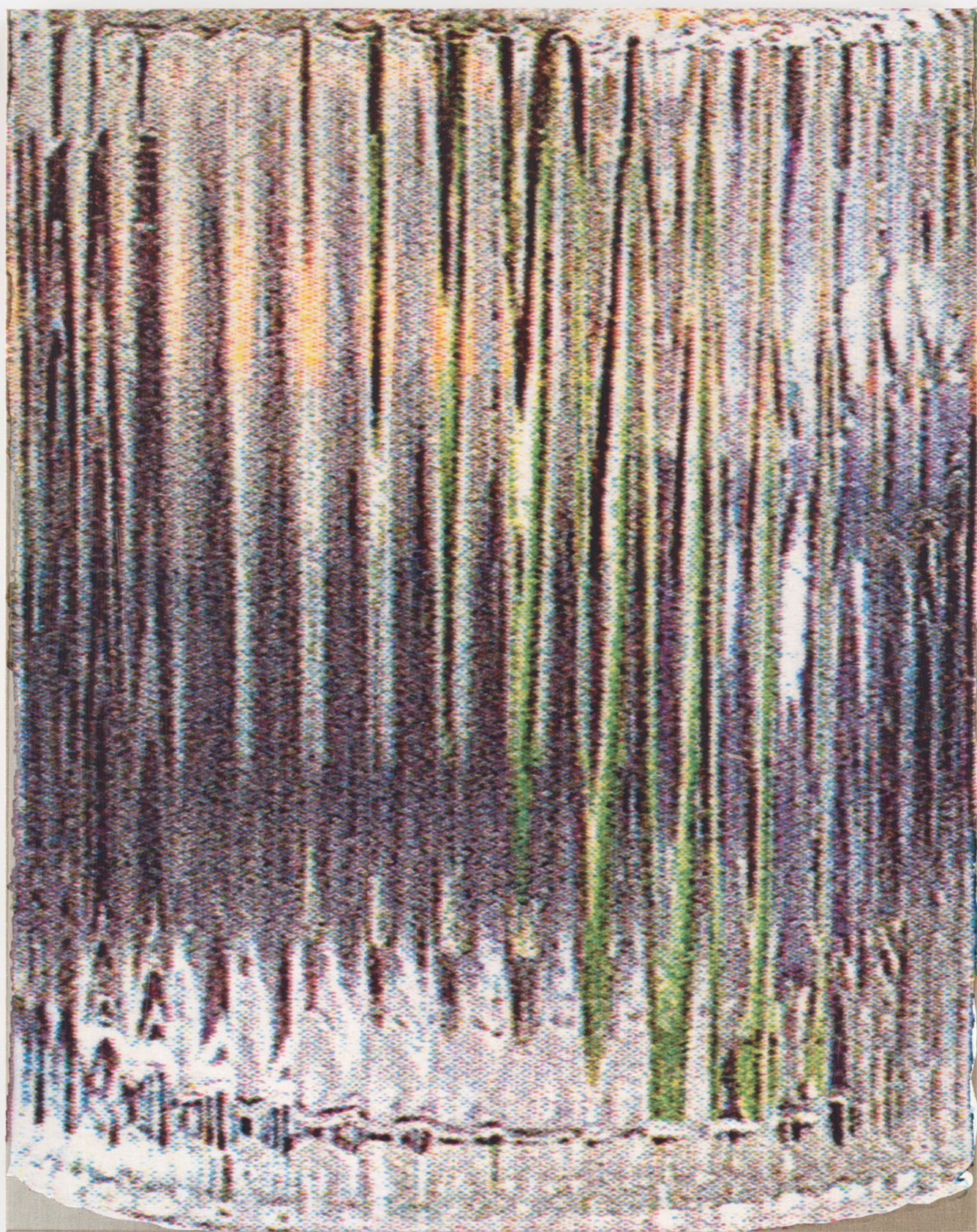
Everyday Life  
2025  
UV Print on Alu-Dibond  
Tile, Natural Stones,  
wooden panel, artist frame  
34 × 45 cm





A Thousand Songs  
2025  
Collaged Magazine, Acrylic paint  
9,5 × 14 cm (image)  
29 × 37 cm (frame)





A Garden a Day  
2025  
UV Print on Gesso on Linen  
120 × 95 cm



# Cool Vanilla

In his first show 'Cool Vanilla' at JVDW gallery, Stephen Kent presents viewers with a contemporary iconography of everyday artefacts rendered in different forms. Selectively scanned magazine fragments are turned into oversized prints on canvas. Quotidian objects are collected and cast into ceramic sculptures. And a series of assemblages are created through the collaging of tiles and mosaic stones within images drawn from his camera roll. These reproductions of inanimate objects are then brought together by Kent in the gallery to form a deconstructed, walk-through still life.

Art history hasn't always looked upon the everyday or mundane, and its reproduction within artworks, with the same admiration or esteem that Kent does. In past centuries, the visual arts were dominated (perhaps tediously) by a strict hierarchy. History painting towered above the rest – ingrained with haughty, classical ideals, it was argued that these grand scenes, which typically depicted biblical scenes, mythological tales or significant historic events, allowed the great painters to express their craft to the fullest. Resolutely at the bottom of the pile lay still life – its immense shame being its humble desire to reproduce inanimate objects in a mechanical way.

Over time, however, notions of taste and value (thankfully) change. During the Dutch Golden age, for instance, growing purchasing power, and a desire to show off this new wealth, led to an explosion in the popularity of still life paintings, as they captured the trappings of commercial abundance. And roughly three centuries later, Dada and the ready-made totally upended the hitherto entrenched values associated with the 'fine' art object. This shift away from rigid hierarchies, and the demolition of the boundaries between what has historically been regarded as high or low visual culture, invites the question: is there, in the end, any real difference in meaning between a 17th century Dutch painting that immortalizes the accoutrements of wealth and taste and an image taken from the pages of *Schöner Wohnen*? Or, is a classical Greek sculpture an inherently more successful or worthy repository of human culture than, say, a Labubu?

The tearing down of canonical distinctions between high and low is fundamental to Kent's practice. He centres and extols the mundane, confronting us with the often overlooked significance of the quotidian. In an apparent contradiction that is reflected in the exhibition's seemingly oxymoronic title, the objects Kent depicts are somehow simultaneously ordinary (vanilla) and extraordinary (cool).

Writing for the catalogue for the exhibition *Die Schönheit der Dinge*, which took place at Kunsthalle Emden in 2024, Kent stated: 'Objects are our idols, icons of our ever-changing systems of meaning and belief.' And what we are presented with in *Cool Vanilla* is an assemblage of these object-idols.

Through his work, Kent asks us to consider how we use everyday objects to create our own personal mythologies. The keys contained in Sundial 1 are a symbol of where we belong. The nail polish ties its wearer to certain trends and brands, or the celebrities that endorse them. Bookshelves, such as the ones in *Everyday Life*, are symbols of the ideas we believe we value. And images from ideal living magazines allow us to project, to ourselves and others, how we would live if we could.

Stephen Kent (\*1985, Pennsylvania, USA) lives and works in Berlin. He studied at Pennsylvania State University in Pennsylvania and Cranbrook Academy of Arts, Bloomfield Hills, USA, graduating with a Master of Fine Arts in 2013. Using an array of different materials and techniques, the work of Stephen Kent explores notions of image production and visual resolution. Alongside an attention to psychedelic culture and comparative mythology, Kent investigates cultural codes and the ways in which they manifest in



seemingly mundane objects. His lively, dynamic compositions combine photo collages and pixel-like mosaics alongside painted gestures, textiles, clay sculptures, and cast plaster, all skillfully honed to form a humorous language addressing the very foundations of the contemporary world. Considered alongside the rising prevalence of artificial intelligence and its emerging ability to imitate and deceive reality, Kent's eclectic images offer an astute and playful comment on the future of images and what the world is made of.

Stephen Kent's work was included in numerous exhibitions in museums and institutions, such as the Museum of Modern Art, Dubrovnik, HR; Brücke Museum, Berlin, DE; CCA Andraxt, Mallorca, DE or recently at Kunsthalle Emden, DE. He has shown in Recent Solo and group exhibitions at Haverkamp Leistenschneider, Berlin DE; Elephant Kunsthall, Lillehammer, NOR; Good Weather Gallery, Chicago, US; Szydlowski Galerie, Warsaw, PL and Renatta Fabri, Milan, IT. His work has been mentioned in Der Tagesspiegel, Die Zeit, Chicago Tribune, Monopol, Handelsblatt and Elephant Magazine.

Text: Lincoln Dexter



**JVDW** gallery

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