

ANDREW KREPS GALLERY

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Roe Ethridge
American Spirit
February 23 – April 8, 2017
Opening Reception: Thursday, February 23, 6-8pm

Andrew Kreps Gallery is pleased to announce *American Spirit*, an exhibition of new work by Roe Ethridge.

In Ethridge's photograph *Untitled (American Spirit)*, 2017, a foreground of blurred roses gives way to a familiar scene of warm light emanating into the night from a window. As it comes into focus, tranquility is soon disrupted by Chinese characters, the after-effect of a computer batch edit, and the house is a backdrop, photographed in between takes on a fashion shoot. This acknowledgment of artifice is central to Ethridge's practice, which takes equally from his work as a commercial photographer, and artist. Employing photographic tropes that span from still lifes to portraiture, Ethridge blurs the lines between the two, creating images that are simultaneously generic and intimate, often treading between humor and cynicism. Functioning in tandem, these motivations coalesce into an ongoing investigation into the mechanics of photographs, and their ability to both retreat into the personal, and expand to relay collective experiences.

This permeates through the works in *American Spirit*, which function as a mirror of our contemporary moment. Despite the wide variety in its constituent parts - subjects range from a low resolution Jasper Johns flag, artificially dyed roses, editorial outtakes, to the eponymous cigarette packs, the photographs build in resonance to create a specific consciousness or visual understanding. Most apparent in heroic images taken during a road trip through the American west on the days surrounding the U.S inauguration, the title reappropriates photography's own history as an inversion of "Spiritual America" – first utilized by Alfred Stieglitz in 1923, and later by Richard Prince. The shared irony in these works inform the exhibition, and become touch points for an attempt to capture a national essence with conflicting feelings of normalcy, nostalgia, dissonance, hope and desire.

In a new series of collaged works titled *Pic n' clips*, which borrow their name from a drawer of coupons cut and collected by the artist's mother, Ethridge pulls from computer desktop archives of the same name built over the past 12 years. Contrasting this slow accumulation, blank swaths of photoshop canvas were populated in a task-like manner, generating nearly accidental networks of images. Printed in transparent layers, and further embellished with rich hues and flattened American Spirit packs, the works create new and unanticipated associations, as images follow the chronological sorting mechanism of the computer. Privileged by the viewer based on factors that include color, repetition of form, or size, they relay a new relation to images in a time when they are subject to constant evaluation as fractions of information, to be completed through evaluation, categorization, and aggregation.

American Spirit is Roe Ethridge's sixth exhibition with the gallery. Nearest Neighbor, Roe Ethridge's first solo museum exhibition in the United States is currently on view at the Contemporary Art Center, Cincinnati, through March 12. Other solo exhibitions include Shelter Island, FOAM, Amsterdam, 2016 and Le Consortium, Dijon, 2012, traveled to Museum Leuven, Leuven, 2012. Ethridge has additionally participated in numerous group exhibitions including *The Poetics of Place: Contemporary Photographs from the Met Collection*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 2016, *Human Interest: Portraits from the Whitney's Collection*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, 2016, *Perfect Likeness: Photography and Composition*, Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, 2015, *The 2013 Lyon Biennale*, Lyon, *The Anxiety of Photography*, Aspen Art Museum, Aspen, 2012, *New Photography 2010: Roe Ethridge, Elad Lassry, Alex Prager, Amanda Ross- Ho*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, and the 2008 Whitney Biennial, among others.