

Valacchi, Maria Chiara, "Calvin Marcus: Peep-Hole," *Artforum.com*, Critics' Picks, December 2015

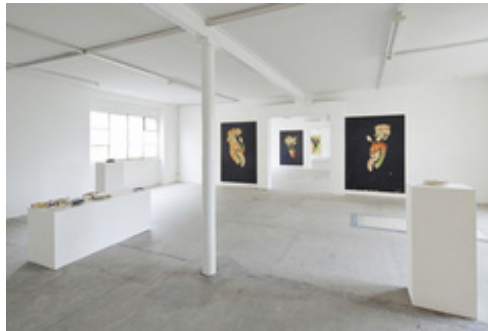
ARTFORUM

Calvin Marcus

PEEP-HOLE

Via Stilicone 10

November 20-January 23



View of "Calvin Marcus," 2015–16.

For his debut solo exhibition in Italy, Calvin Marcus has created a body of work that delves into different formal registers. Based on the gallery's architecture, wherein three rooms unfold one after the other, the installation reveals dual aspects of solids and voids. The show's path is laid out so that it appears dense with works as one progresses through the show but empty as one returns to the exit. As a result, the site is perceived first as an exhibition space and then as an untouched domestic environment.

In the first room, the artist has positioned eleven small ceramics on three plinths. The sculptures have a childlike quality, presenting groups of smiling cetaceans. This ironic and light beginning offsets the disquietude expressed in the rest of the show by a series of nine large paintings titled "Me with Tongue," 2015. These are arranged as pairs of self-portraits and are based on smaller crayon sketches, which have been magnified onto canvas. Here, the artist obsessively offers a reflection on the authorial and narcissistic aspects of an artistic creative practice. Executed in black, red, and green oil paint, these works echo at times the small ceramic objects: There are smiling but also grotesque, satanic, and ridiculous faces that emerge from off-white or black monochrome backgrounds. Throughout the exhibition, Marcus has staged an emotional experiment in search of a point of equilibrium between poetry and discomfort, presenting a smart analysis of artistic identity.

Translated from Italian by Marguerite Shore.

– Maria Chiara Valacchi