



THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH
Edinburgh College of Art

UOA D32

ART AND DESIGN:
HISTORY, THEORY AND PRACTICE



RESEARCHER

Keith Farquhar

OUTPUT TITLE

Headspace App

OUTPUT TYPE

Body of Artefacts

DATES

1 September – 10 November 2018

01 / STATEMENT

FIG. 1
Headspace App, 2018, installation view,
 Cabinet, London. Image courtesy the Artist
 and Cabinet London
 Photograph by Mark Blower

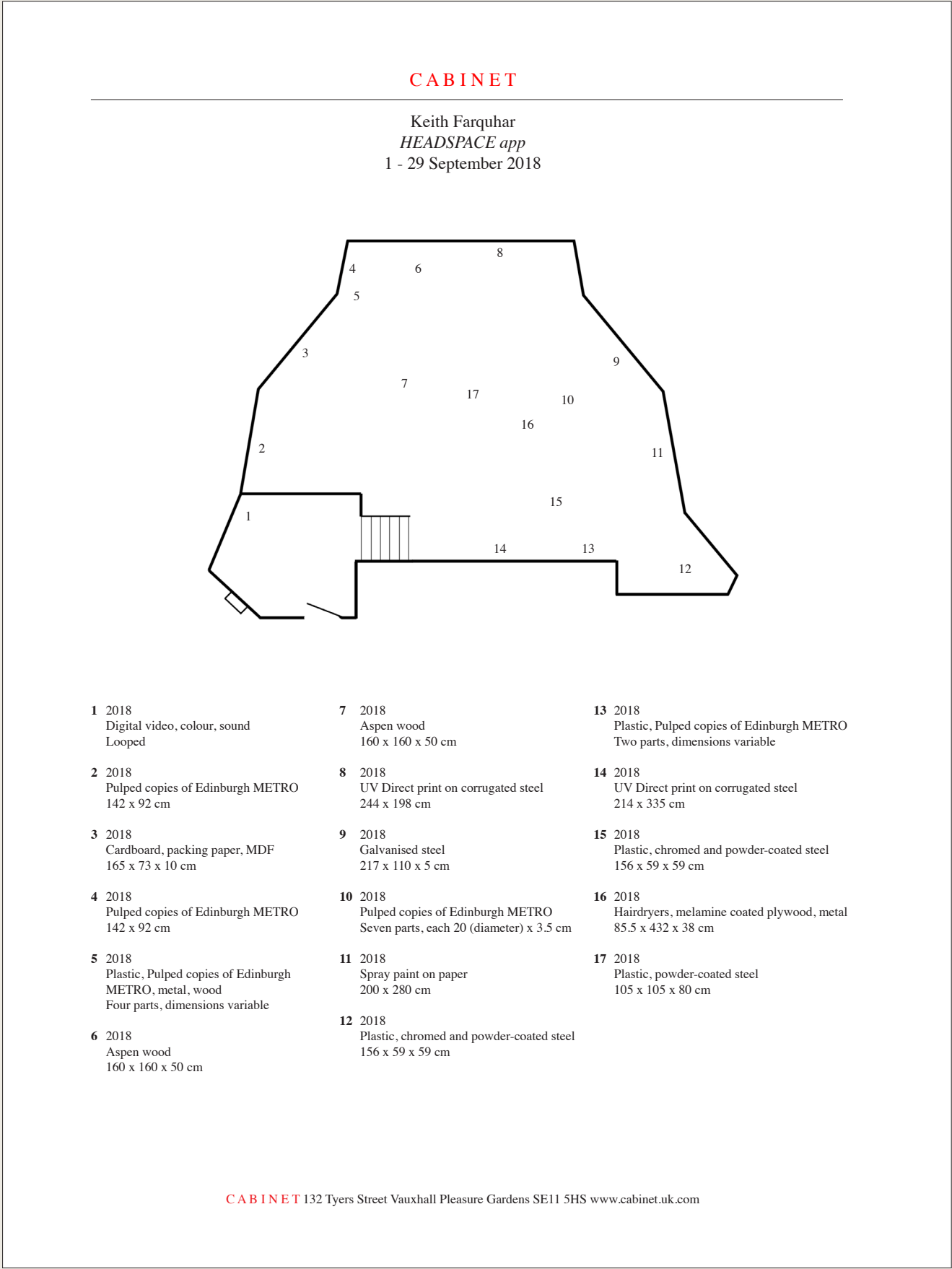


Headspace App was an exhibition of seventeen works by Farquhar at Cabinet Gallery, London, from 1 September – 10 November 2018. It consisted of a collection of mixed media works and adapted found objects inspired by Farquhar's daily life in Edinburgh, such as the commute on public transport, the use of meditation apps, visits to the municipal sauna, childcare, shopping and visits to the gym.

Farquhar employs painterly, sculptural and moving-image processes, together with conceptual strategies, to advance the artistic potential of the readymade object. The works explore the impact of contemporary capitalist and consumerist culture on human experience and demonstrate ways in which forms of adaption and resistance can manifest. They combine this conceptual critique with an investigation into the technical and aesthetic conditions of image making in the digital age and attempt to further imagine the ever-changing status of appropriation within contemporary culture.

Following the exhibition at Cabinet, one of the works was selected for the 25th anniversary of the art fair *Artissima* at the Oval, Turin, Italy (1 – 4 November 2018). The fair attracted 50,000 visitors. The international fashion house, Symonds Pearmain, subsequently used Farquhar's installation for their Spring/Summer 2019 collection. In place of hosting a runway show, they filmed their collection against the backdrop of Farquhar's Cabinet exhibition (see Appendix, page 25).

FIG. 2
Headspace App, 2018, floorplan,
Cabinet, London. Image courtesy
the Artist and Cabinet London
Photograph by Mark Blower



02 / RESEARCH DIMENSIONS

The research is practice-led and incorporates a range of procedures, methods and techniques that cross installation, performance, site-specific intervention and object-making. Farquhar employs painterly, sculptural, digital image techniques and moving-image processes to experiment with the modification of readymade objects and image-production.

In terms of subject matter, Farquhar draws on a range of conceptual and post-conceptual strategies, including journeying and autobiography. The research also references traditions within conceptual art of the artist as urban ethnographer, documenting urban life through routine experience – in this case, Farquhar’s daily life in Edinburgh, and banal activities such as the commute on public transport, the use of meditation apps, visits to the municipal sauna, childcare, shopping and visits to the gym.

This research uses these techniques and subjects to investigate key themes: the impacts on human experience of contemporary capitalist and consumerist culture, the aesthetic and technical conditions and possibilities of image making in the digital age, tensions between the aesthetic and the functional in installation and the ongoing conceptual function of the practice of appropriation.



FIG. 3
Headspace App, 2018, hairdryers,
 melamine coated plywood, metal.
 Image courtesy the Artist and Cabinet
 London
 Photograph by Mark Blower

FIG. 4
 Detail of corrugated painting showing
 'schizoid' gesture that appears both
 printed and sprayed. Image courtesy
 the Artist and Cabinet London
 Photograph by Mark Blower



03 / ORIGINALITY

Extending the traditions of the readymade and appropriation, Farquhar's work offers wry critiques of aspects of consumer culture and representations of its impact on human experience.

The objects that Farquhar repurposes or remakes – clothes, corporate logos, baby seats, gym equipment and meditation apps – are all connected to his daily experience of the city. As such, they are invested both as a comment on urban life and on the condition of the artist as a hybrid subject: a producer, consumer and citizen.

Works in *Headspace App* included a giant image of a swimming pool timetable, enlarged and printed onto corrugated steel, wooden sauna bench sculptures, a hair dryer station, a looped hidden camera video of a gym shot at an oblique angle, an inverted crowd control barrier/towel rack, large sheets of handmade paper made from pulped Metro newspapers, and portable baby seat sculptures harnessed to weight lifting bars or repurposed as a chandelier. Assembled in the gallery, the works recreate – in disjointed fashion – the atmosphere of a quasi-functional environment, like a gym full of disused equipment and marked by the palpable absence of bodies. At the same time, the installations evoke something altogether more haphazard – such as stock items in a warehouse waiting to be moved to the shop floor.

Part of the originality of this work lies in its new and playful (mis)use of contemporary technological processes, and in its innovative stagings of digital and analogue processes that challenge the boundaries and possibilities of images. For instance, the corrugated paintings (paintings made on corrugated steel) (FIGS. 4, 5, 6, 11 & 12) are printed with ink directly onto corrugated steel. Because the support surface is fluted and the print heads must be raised to accommodate this, the ink appears both printed (at the peaks of the corrugations) and sprayed (at the troughs of the corrugations). This produces the effect of a 'schizoid' gesture that traverses the analogue and digital (FIG. 4). Farquhar's paintings jettison traditional painterly mark-making in favor of mechanically produced 'artistic' gestures that single out and interrogate questions around artistry and the value attached to the artist's hand.

In exploring such dynamics and tensions within contemporary image making, these works situate themselves in the context of other recent practices that comment on the status of the artistic gesture in the age of digital media, the misuse of technology and the blurring of artistic genres (Christopher Wool; Wade Guyton). They extend the conversation raised by such practices by foregrounding ways in which mechanisms of installation can enhance investigations of image production.

FIG. 5

Headspace App, UV direct print on corrugated galvanised steel. *Headspace App*, 2018, Cabinet, London. Image courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London
Photograph by Mark Blower



04 / RIGOUR

The body of works was developed over a period of three years. During this time Farquhar rigorously experimented with and perfected a whole range of methods, techniques and strategies to bring the various pieces to fruition.

The series of corrugated paintings were printed with ink directly onto galvanised steel. They were produced with two spray cans simultaneously, using both hands. Versions were sprayed first on paper in black spray paint (FIG. 6) before being transferred by UV direct printing onto corrugated steel (FIG. 5). Both versions were exhibited together, undermining any hierarchy between original and reproduction.

Observing that the packaging paper in an Amazon box was formally reminiscent of intestines, Farquhar glued the paper into the box to fix it and hung the opened box onto the wall like a painting, using a simple MDF structure. The condition of the capitalist 'consumer' is made literal through this corporeal depiction (FIG. 7).

A regular user of Edinburgh Leisure's gym, pool and sauna, Farquhar noticed that the formal qualities of the sauna benches were reminiscent of Robert Morris's seminal sculptures, *Untitled (3Ls)*, 1965/1970. Remaking sauna benches within the exhibition (FIGS. 8–10) was a way of subverting the masculine, purist language of minimalism by domesticating it and recontextualising it within the context of leisure, whilst also literalizing its relationship to the human body.

The orange work on corrugated steel (FIGS. 11 & 12) is a massive enlargement of the Edinburgh Leisure swimming pool timetable. Times allocated to different categories and demographics – 'Public Swimming with Lanes', 'AquaFit', 'Senior Citizens', 'Ladies Only' – dissolve and mutate as the UV printer struggles to print on the corrugated surface. The ink disperses into the troughs of the corrugation producing blurs and runs, as though the timetable had been dredged

up from the bottom of the swimming pool which it administers.

Farquhar is a daily user of public transport. He collected discarded Metro newspapers from the upper decks of buses and pulped them to produce large blank sheets of handmade paper (FIGS. 14–16). The propaganda of the paper is neutralized and converted into a 'mute', anodyne and neutral shade of grey.

The giant ecstasy tablets (FIGS. 17–19) were also made with pulped Metros. The tablets were molded in a domestic cake tin that Farquhar modified by applying a makeshift Mitsubishi logo to the mould. (Mitsubishis were one of the most popular and recognizable batches of ecstasy tabs in the 90s.) The tablets echo the giant tablets in Martin Kippenberger's 1990 work *I am going into the birch forest as my pills will be taking effect soon* (FIG. 20), and Chris Morris' infamous *Brass Eye* episode that duped celebrities and politicians with Cake – 'a made-up drug'. The giant tablets were exhibited alongside their moulds, the filthy basins used to pulp the paper and discarded bottles of Milk of Magnesia, used for its alkaline purposes to stop the paper turning yellow. This gave the presentation a grungy appearance that stood in deliberate contrast with the conservative reactions of the UK's tabloid newspapers.

Like the Amazon box, the crowd control barrier (FIG. 21) received minimal intervention.

It was rotated 90 degrees and hung on the wall, to effectively resemble a large towel rail. The resulting work evokes the notion of authoritarian control and its unseen relationship with privilege and luxury.

FIG. 6
Installation view of *Headspace App*,
spray-paint on paper and *Gym Figure*,
chromed steel curl bar; and child's
plastic bike seat. Cabinet, London.
Courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London
Photograph by Mark Blower

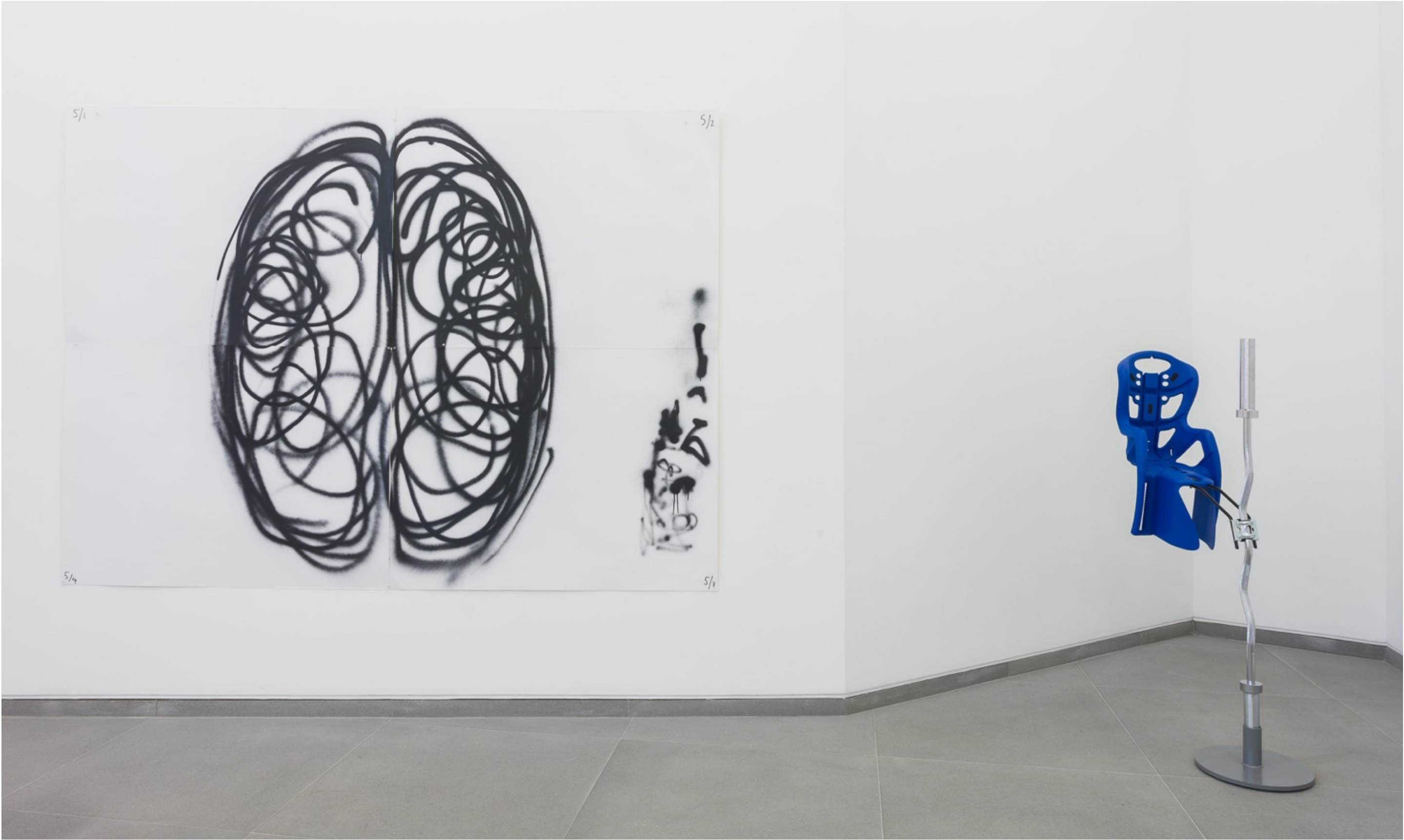


FIG. 7
Headspace App, cardboard box, packing paper,
 MDF. *Headspace App*, 2018, Cabinet, London.
 Courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London
 Photograph by Mark Blower



FIG. 8
 Installation view. *Headspace App*,
 2018, Cabinet, London. Image
 Courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London
 Photograph by Mark Blower.



FIG. 9
 Installation view showing sauna
 bench sculptures – made from
 Aspen wood. *Headspace App*, 2018,
 Cabinet, London. Image Courtesy the
 Artist and Cabinet London
 Photograph by Mark Blower

FIG. 10
 Robert Morris *Untitled (3Ls)*,
 1965/1970. Installation view,
 Whitney Museum 2011, from
 The Whitney Museum of
 American Art, *The Handbook
 of the Collection*, Yale University
 Press.

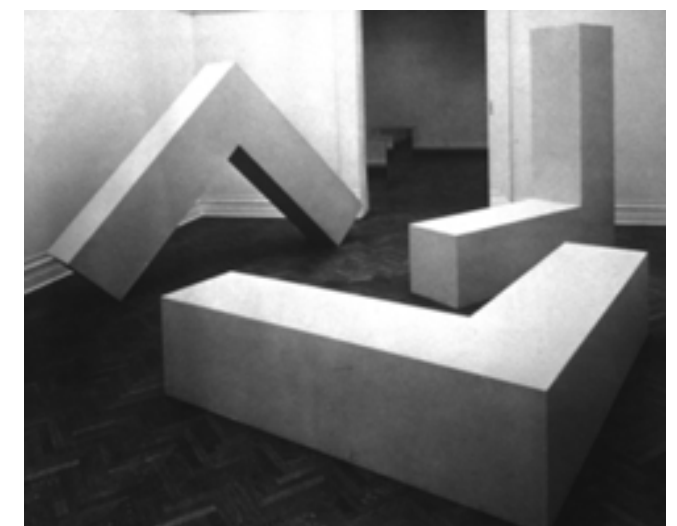


FIG. 11
Large swimming pool timetable (detail), UV
direct print on corrugated, galvanized steel.
Headspace App, 2018, Cabinet, London. Image
courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London
Photograph by Mark Blower



FIG. 12
Installation view showing large
swimming pool timetable, UV direct
print on corrugated, galvanized steel.
Headspace
App, 2018, Cabinet, London. Image
courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London
Photograph by Mark Blower





FIG. 13
Children's bike seats, powder-coated steel. *Headspace App*, 2018, Cabinet, London. Image courtesy of Mark Blower / Cabinet.



FIG. 14
Discarded Metro newspapers on bus. Photo Keith Farquhar.



FIG. 15
Installation view showing pulped paper sheet and Amazon Box, cardboard box, packing paper, MDF. *Headspace App*, 2018, Cabinet, London. Image courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London
Photograph by Mark Blower



FIG. 16
Handmade paper (detail) made from pulped Metro newspaper. Image courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London
Photograph by Mark Blower

FIG. 17
Giant ecstasy tablets made from pulped Metro newspapers. Image courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London
Photograph by Mark Blower

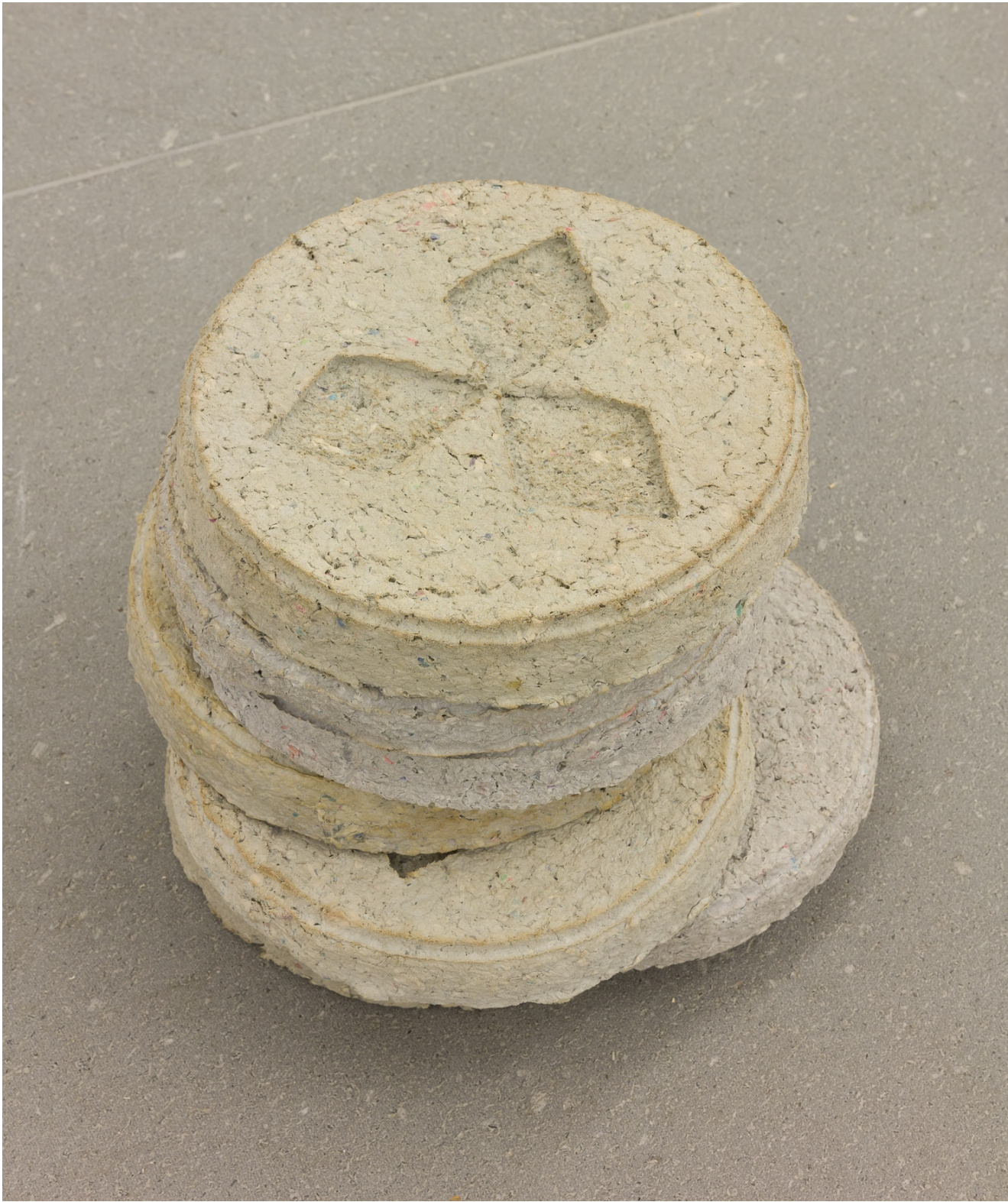


FIG. 18 & 19
Ecstasy tablets, pulped Metro newspapers, plastic basins, repurposed cake tin, wood, plastic bottles. Image courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London
Photograph by Mark Blower





FIG. 20
Martin Kippenberger, *I am going into the birch forest as my pills will be taking effect soon*, Anders Tornberg Gallery, Sweden, 1990.

FIG. 21
Crowd control barrier, galvanized steel. *Headspace App*, 2018, Cabinet, London. Image courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London
Photograph by Mark Blower





FIGS. 22 & 23
Farquhar's work, *Red Brain* from *Headspace App*, alongside works by Gili Tal, Henrik Olesen, Calla Henkel & Max Pitegoff and Pierre Klossowski. Cabinet Gallery booth, *Artissima*, The Oval, Turin, Italy, 1 – 4 November 2018. Images courtesy the Artist and Cabinet London. Photograph by Mark Blower

05 / SIGNIFICANCE

Farquhar's research engages with contemporary approaches to sculpture and painting in the age of digital media. It attempts to develop the proposition of the readymade in ways that are speculative and probes into the continued significance of the artist's hand in a digital and virtual world.

Farquhar is represented by Cabinet, one of London's premier and most esteemed galleries of contemporary art. Cabinet also represents artists such as Ed Atkins, Marc Camille Chaimowicz, Jana Euler and Mark Leckey. The collaboration with the fashion label Symonds Pearmain brought a new and wider audience to Farquhar's work. The staging of the fashion show within his exhibition at Cabinet brought out further dimensions of the work's critical engagement with consumerism and luxury goods.

All the works in *Headspace App* were newly made for the exhibition. The exhibition was widely advertised, through national and international listings and social media, as were the satellite events – *Artissima*, 2018 (with visitor numbers of 50,000).

The Symonds Pearmain Spring/Summer collection 2019 was previewed and featured in *Vogue* and *ID* magazines. The exhibition was reviewed by *Contemporary Art Writing Daily* (see Appendix, page 25).



FIGS. 24 – 26
Symonds Pearmain Spring/
Summer 2019 Collection filmed
within Farquhar's *Headspace App*
exhibition, Cabinet, Gallery, 2018.



06 / APPENDIX

Film

Symonds Pearmain Spring/Summer
collection 2019 film, shot within Farquhar's
Headspace App exhibition.

Review

The exhibition was reviewed by
Contemporary Art Writing Daily.

[http://www.artwritingdaily.com/2018/10/
keith-farquhar-at-cabinet.html](http://www.artwritingdaily.com/2018/10/keith-farquhar-at-cabinet.html)



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