



# GUEST APPEARANCES

Chris Bucklow's subjects are friends and family, his images eerily low tech

If the auction houses of New York and London are to be believed photography is the fastest growing sector of the art market. With fewer quality paintings in circulation, investors are looking towards new media such as photography to collect. There is still a reticence in Scotland, though, to embrace this market as New York has. Cultural theorist Walter Benjamin predicted that the advent of photography would spell the death of the original, that mass production would make the artist redundant. The idea of the reproduction is intriguing to artists; it suggests the inhuman, the mechanical and the mass-produced, a format that represents modern life. While some photographers revel in the possibilities of the multiple, Manchester-born Chris Bucklow has turned these ideas on their head and returned to the original.

Unlike conventional photography, each of his images is a photogram, unique and unrepeatable. Bucklow uses a pinhole camera-like technique, creating an unusually intense quality of light. He begins by making life-size silhouette drawings, direct from the sitter's shadow on to sheets of aluminium foil, which are then painstakingly pierced with up to 25,000 pinholes within the outline of the shape. These pinholes will act as the camera's lenses. Using a camera, which Bucklow made from an old crate, he places the foil on top and loads colour photographic paper at the back. He then takes this on to the roof of his London studio, exposing it to the sunlight, recording multiple images of the sun and sky and

simultaneously forming the shape of the figure on the paper behind. Bucklow achieves a variation in the different works depending on the intensity of the sunlight, the time of day and the speed at which the pinholes are exposed to the light.

Bucklow's subjects are his friends and family, though he sees the work as a collective self-portrait. Each image in the series is a

'Guest', one of a cast of characters each representing a type of personality that he already possesses – or that he admires and aspires to incorporate into himself. Others in the Guest series represent attributes he wishes to expel from his mind. The overall effect is an eerie yet beautiful image, which glows

with an inner light. The figures seem disembodied, yet at the same time powerfully present: they are at once human and inhuman, bound to the earth and reaching for the heavens.

In a world of digital imagery, Bucklow's work is resolutely low-tech and, as such, explores the generative process of chance. Each work, unrepeatable and dependent on external influences brings photography back to its basic photochemical process; his images are simply pictures of light. The artist's hand is in evidence throughout, proving that there is still room for the 'work of art in the age of mechanical reproduction' which should make Scottish collectors struggling with the concept of 'the multiple' happy. ■

## WITH TRACEY McNEE

Tracey, founder of Pivotal art, was a consultant with Christie's in New York

email Tracey at [tracey@pivotal-art.com](mailto:tracey@pivotal-art.com)

