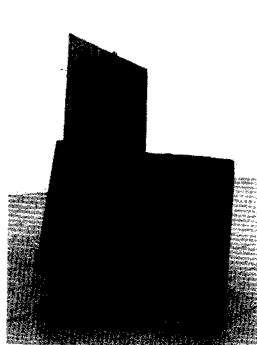


THOMAS SWINKELS

Born 1988, Netherlands

One aspect of Thomas Swinkels' presentation is underwater video footage filmed by a drone, a technology-assisted navigation of cloudy depths involving as much seeking as finding. This feels appropriate, since parsing his constellation of approaches – which also includes found-object sculpture and thermal-printed imagery – involves both making connections and engaging with the unanswerable. Heat and its absence keep recurring as subjects, as seeming metaphors: see, for example, Swinkels' neo-minimal row of busted-open safes, found by dredging waterways with a magnet. Another video ominously deploys thermal imaging on birds; while in photographic images made using a direct thermal printer, the image appears in strip-like fragments and includes formal artefacts resulting from the printer overheating. Swinkels prints on both transparent film (which looks fragile but is durable), and on paper, and the latter images are not static: they'll fade in time. This factor is germane to the dynamics of his art – its apparent interest in recall and, relatedly, the virtues and limitations of documentation.

Unified by the artist's manipulation of the exhibition space's lighting to summon a crepuscular, in-between atmosphere, his works converse with each other so that submarine space becomes psychological space to be explored, and live creatures and recalled places figure as temporary emanations of warmth. Factors in the exhibition display, meanwhile, variously create sensations of blocking and emptiness, set off by bursts of information. This, and the works themselves, add up to something double-edged. It's implied that technical means might offer a way into the past or the mind, but only superficially, and what we remember and how we think of what we see is changing too. All here, accordingly, moves towards a condition of quietly violent abstraction in which representations only emerge through a process of distortion, damage or translation. In the process, Swinkels' art asserts itself as an emotive paradox: it speaks of memory yet situates its core as perpetually out of reach.



safe, 2018 smn, 2019 nocturne (still), 2019