

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY

1062 North Orange Grove, Los Angeles, California 90046 323-654-1830 matthewmarks.com

ARTFORUM



Paul Mpagi Sepuya, *Mirror Ground Study* (_1990600), 2016, ink-jet print in artist's frame, 24 7/8 x 21 5/8".

LOS ANGELES

“Positioner”

MATTHEW MARKS GALLERY | 1062 N
ORANGE GROVE
1062 N Orange Grove
October 13 - December 22

This five-person group show, spread across two gallery locations, has its most cogent moment in the pairing of sculptor Julia Phillips and photographer Paul Mpagi Sepuya, both of whom create disorienting objects with unsettling relationships to the body. Phillips’s *Intruder Study IV*, 2017, is a phantasmal pseudo-tool that performs the titular action (intrusion) via a twenty-five-inch-long spiraling shaft, resembling an outsize drill bit, that at first glance appears to be made of metal. The clue to its actual composition is the jackhammer-type handle from which it hangs, an eleven-inch-wide strip of clay with indentations left by the hands that formed it. Its

shiny, crackly salt glaze varnishes the tactual form with fleshy salmons, whites, and tans. Simultaneously action-oriented and inoperative, the tool’s true function seems to be stirring up sinister visions of surfaces (or skins?) pierced and penetrated.

On the same wall hangs Sepuya’s *Mirror Ground Study* (_1990600), 2016, a kind of self-portrait in which the shadowy outline of the kneeling artist hovers behind a pale pink scrim. In his hand he holds a camera that pokes through a hole in the cloth, gently pulling it down to create a run of tension in the fabric from the top left corner to the lens. The stretching and puckering of the fabric render it nearly anthropomorphic, closer to latex than to skin. Its cut and quasi-bodily materiality is captured more precisely than the assumed subject of the photograph hidden behind it, perhaps indicating that a body’s surface hides more than it reveals. At the intersection of Sepuya’s and Phillips’s works, the viewer’s attention is drawn beyond the construction of the depicted objects, toward the multifarious construction of absent, obscured, and implied subjects.

— *Ashton Cooper*

Cooper, Ashton. “Positioner.” *Artforum*, November 5, 2018.