

Calvin Marcus

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(author: Allese Thomson)

In 1684, a hall of mirrors was erected in Versailles as an immersive stage that would send countless reflections of a single expression into the world. If today the screen fulfills the function of the mirror, we're left with a troubling question: Is the digital image more complete than a reflection? It's an anxious proposition and one occupying Calvin Marcus, though the Los Angeles-based artist doesn't make digital images. He favors clay and sticks of oil, tempered hardboard and corrugated cardboard, creating small sculptures—a sleeping ceramic shark, a crib-like wooden cage, doll-sized houses lit with purple LEDs—unique worlds brimming with angst and desire, works that deal in the poetics of nostalgia and repression.

For his New York debut, he presents one series, *Green Calvin*, 2014, which consists of ten monochrome green paintings, each with a ceramic green chicken fixed to its center. The color evokes a greenroom—the space where actors wait before performing—which spotlights our current liberty to put our lives on camera, to personally sculpt public identity. The clay, pulled and pushed to create a cadaver of a plucked fowl, looks soft and creepy. Marcus has carved out a face, his own, in the center, and each expression is very different, as if he has caught and sculpted various reflections. It's all a bit nightmarish—finding one's visage in raw flesh, being forced to pace in an infinity of selves—evoking the delirious level of upkeep our digital bodies require, the burden of manipulating reflection into image.

At the back of the gallery, there is one departure from Marcus's labyrinth of green souls: a door that has been installed in the wall. It does not open. A broken clock has been adhered over its glass window—it's the only image in the show.