

Alejandro Guijarro's works are to-scale photographs of blackboards in academic institutions all over the world that specialize in quantum mechanics: Oxford, UC Berkeley, Stanford, CERN. The blackboards, photographed with a large format camera in an emptied lecture hall, are presented face-on, frameless, their roiled surfaces reminiscent of mid-century abstract painting (Twombly, Pollock, even Rothko).

The dynamic abstract forms of scuffed chalk and dragged erasers might allude, as those painted precursors might, to the expressive power of the individual gesture, even a yearning towards the sublime: something inexpressible, beyond the limited range of language. No accident, therefore, that Guijarro chooses the study of quantum mechanics as his subject – the study of the physics of the microscopically small, whose very formulae are expressed in abstract terms. That these are photographs, though, brings additional meanings into play. Each image records the physical traces of a mental movement, the speed, repetition and emphasis of individual strokes suggesting a particular train of thought or area of questioning. Yet each blackboard is a token of something lost; every photograph records something subsequently erased or smudged into nothing, acting like the mind itself when attempting to absorb the complex, the inexpressible.

Saatchi gallery,

Ben Street. 2012