MAXIMILLIAN WILLIAM

47 MORTIMER STREET, LONDON, W1W 8HJ
info@maximillianwilliam.com +44 (0) 207 998 4054

A Meaningful Order
OK-RM

13 February – 8 March 2025

Maximillian William is delighted to present *A Meaningful Order*, a solo exhibition by OK-RM, the practice of Oliver Knight and Rory McGrath, curated by James Langdon. Alongside the show, they will host a series of "Meetings" with collaborators and friends of the studio, held over consecutive Thursday evenings and aimed at encouraging critical discourse. This is the first exhibition in London dedicated to the work of OK-RM and will also be accompanied by a comprehensive book published by InOtherWords.

OK-RM practice design in ways which have not long been possible. Founded in London in 2008 by Knight and McGrath, the studio approaches cultural production with a resolutely contemporary outlook: attuned to a networked communication space, undeterred by the realities of global commerce, and with a degree of technical autonomy which their predecessors would hardly have countenanced. Even half a century ago the designer's imaginary was dominated and disciplined by established craft and industrial practices, its attention consumed by achieving accuracy in production.

However, the studio is far from self-contained. Its exchanges with other practices — spatial, time-based, performative — take on a novel emphasis. Collaborators are engaged not merely to *outsource* and *output* according to conventional divisions of labour, but rather *curatorially*, to expand the conceptual vocabulary around a project. Each project's roster contributes to its affect, and design, as OK-RM practice it, becomes primarily a discursive matter. Literacies, cultural codes, and dissemination are the preoccupations of the daily conversation in the studio. Formal aspects of design: its practical functionality, its alluring high-finish, are secondary, taken for granted.

Even as the past two decades have enabled new forms of design practice, so have they seen design's publics fracture and complicate. The whole notion of a singular, shared consciousness, upheld by the centralised hierarchies of traditional media, has been undermined by the immediacy and pervasiveness of the internet. Again, OK-RM's timing is critical. They were educated in the codes of print culture, and yet they have always understood that a designed object's *image* is essential, every bit as significant as its materiality. This fluency in print and digital media has inevitably brought OK-RM into contact with fashion. There, where twenty-first century culture, technology, and commerce meet at maximum intensity, the studio embraces the fluidity of the contemporary while rejecting its trashy, over-ironised aesthetics.

This exhibition borrows its title from Victor Papanek's 1985 description of design as "a conscious and intuitive effort to impose meaningful order." Papanek's language remains relevant for OK-RM. *Conscious:* as in outward-looking, alert. *Intuitive:* unbound by entrenched methods. The word impose might be jarring, however, implying a tactless or deterministic attitude. In the printing industry it historically described an economical way of arranging pages for production, in anticipation of their subsequent transformation by folding, cutting, and binding, and it is this anticipatory perspective which resonates for OK-RM. Everything is seen *as it will be*. Every potential message, every wording, every image, every technical detail, is evaluated in light of the inflections which will follow from its mediation and remediation. This way of seeing is the studio's craft.

47 MORTIMER STREET, LONDON, W1W 8HJ
info@maximillianwilliam.com +44 (0) 207 998 4054

Modular display structures, designed in collaboration with Alexandra Gerber, are used in combination with repurposed shipping crates from the exhibition's first instantiation at X Sign Space in Hangzhou, China, and adapted to the existing conditions of Maximillian William's gallery. Since the exhibition format might tend to privilege print and objects, several substantial works in moving image are presented here on small screens, laid flat in order to create a continuity with the printed matter. Other formats — performance, event, exhibition — often lead, in OK-RM's work, to the generation of assets which are reabsorbed into further production. As such, glimpses of the studio's expanded and undisciplined nature recur throughout the exhibition, particularly in their long-term, ongoing, and open-ended collaborations with brands.

The exhibition has two curatorial conceits. The work is arranged in and on the display structures without a strict organising principle. Overall categories are not a concern. Objects find various relations with each other, inspired by a protagonist, a colour, a reference, composition, technique, economy, and so on. Four *overlays* are also imagined, drawn from *A Meaningful Order*, the accompanying publication. These show the studio operating beyond industry-standard workflows and experimenting with materiality throughout the design process; employing historical readymades and investing in ubiquitous visual languages; and ultimately plotting the passage of cultural artefacts holistically, through conception, production, and distribution.

Text by James Langdon

Programme
Details of the full programme of "Meetings" will be announced soon along with a limited ticket release. They will run every Thursday evening for the duration of the exhibition.

OK-RM
Founded by Oliver Knight and Rory McGrath in 2008, is intent on pushing the potentialities of what a design practice can be. For Knight and McGrath design is here understood — in its broadest sense — as a means of communicating, a transitive verb that operates laterally across disciplines and media. Based in London and working globally, OK-RM operates at the pivot point where attitude becomes form. Interrogating beliefs, procedures, behavioural, temporal and material realities, OK-RM (re)consider what it means to operate progressively within the world and work together. This approach often results in long-standing exchanges and collaborations, notable examples have included Goldwin 0, Virgil Abloh, 1017-ALYX-9SM, T.T, JW Anderson and The MET. Extending the curiosity and nuance of OK-RM, InOtherWords was founded in 2015 as a means to further pursue collaborative exchange within the book form. Their interest in pedagogical approaches has led them into multiple teaching, lecturing and exhibition forums.