

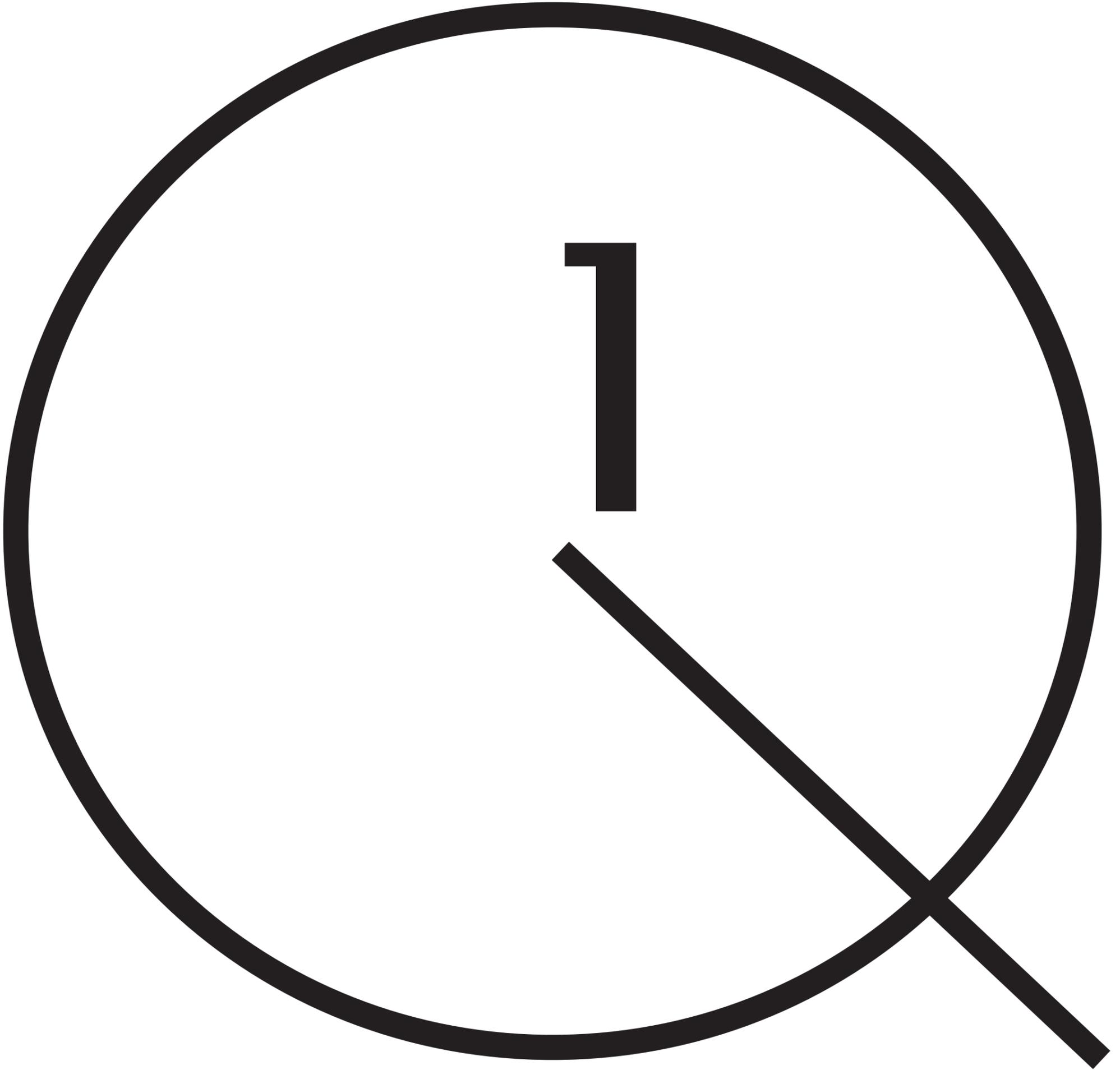
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Matt's Gallery

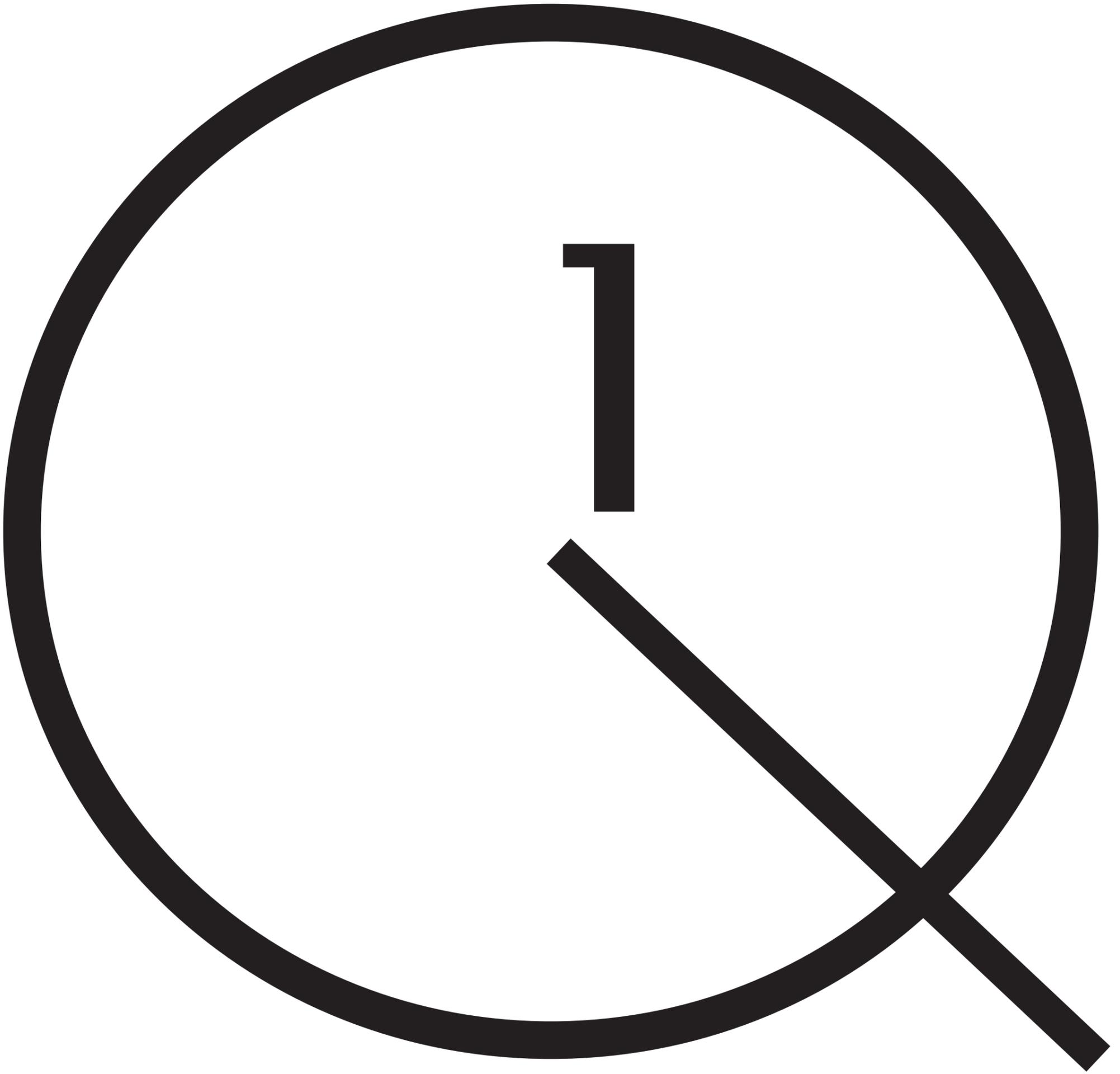
Q!

Matt's Gallery

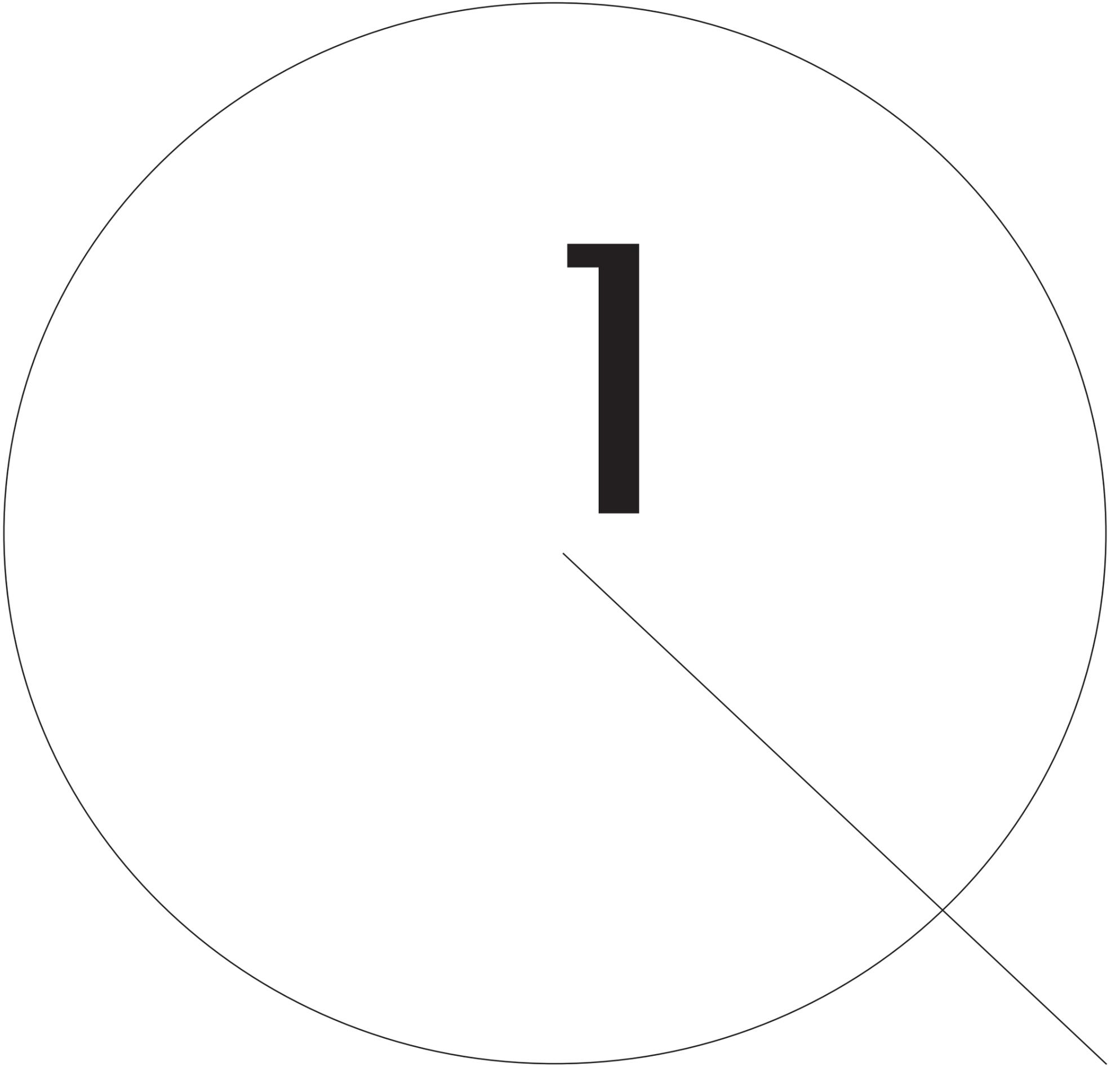
Q



Matt's Gallery



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Matt's Gallery Q1

Q is a new series of interviews, conducted to coincide with the programme at Matt's Gallery.

Luke McCreadie interviewed by Tim Dixon

Tim Dixon: Can we start with the title, *A length of spit dangled from a mouth?*

Luke McCreadie: A lot of the things in the show are elongated, thin and sort of spindly or not quite there like the chairs or the hanging works, like stalactites or stalagmites. I have always been in awe of those calcifications and the sense of time which they formally visualise. A length of spit is temporary, fleeting and eventually breaks, I have been thinking about both the disappearing nature of spoken language and the physically present idea of sculpture. I think when I am making sculpture I quite often think about my body in relation to it and how some of the materials I use, like plaster, wax and resin, look a bit like bodily materials. When I was a child, I have this memory of purposefully dribbling on pillows, and then feeling it, feeling the kind of coldness or the texture of it with my finger and it being sort of comforting somehow and this has something to do with sculpture.

The title made me think about the kind of forms that you work with which are often lumpy or awkward and don't feel permanent or solid. But also, about language and what comes out of the mouth - something being in play between verbal, written and sculptural language. The idea of something coming from the mouth that's not words.

Well there is a muteness to spit but it comes from the same place as language which is the opposite of muteness, it also lubricates language and you can hear it as part of language as well. I quite often think about what it would feel like if my words came out solid, or what the nature of them would be if I were exchanging solid objects with you now instead of this stuff that disappears into the ether, which is what verbal language does, it sort of disappears, or used to before twitter, which forms part of a problem that I am interested in - where verbal language is overused in our navigation of both the world and each other. Perhaps if we just exchanged more objects in silence we would do better.

Like in some of your recent videos where you are rendering words into solids? Or, for instance, when they are then made or cast? Words like 'chat'.

You often seem to take text to a point where it starts to lose its legibility.

A lot of the time it's a case of, how do I get language into the work without it becoming something that I don't like looking at? I find text very difficult and to push its legibility is a bit like dissecting it, to try and look at it as a non-user, impossible maybe? With the work for this show, with the 'chat', pronounced in English or French depending on which way you look at it. I was thinking of those as almost like spaghetti, coming out of a mouth and how you would suck in spaghetti, or do it the other way around where it is kind of an elongated shape. Or what shape a whistle would be. These are all formal concerns related to language but I think there is also a political side to it as well. Particularly now, when it's kind of urgent - horrendous things are happening - there is a sense that we need to talk about these things. What then happens to formal ideas? Should we forget them for a bit? They can feel so irrelevant, but they are not. Verbal and written language doesn't seem to have helped particularly recently, we have just made a huge decision as a country based on only the words yes and no as far as I can tell. This boiling down of language to a binary essence is not useful and I think complexity and nuance are in severe danger of seeming too difficult. The dominance of verbal language as a tool for getting us through difficult periods is a problem because for me verbal language itself contains and incubates some of the problems of today. I am trying to force language to become a formal concern and then also through that trying to get to the heart of the problem which I have with my existence in the world, where I often find that language is completely inadequate, fails me, adds to problems. Some forms of verbal and written language feel inadequate in some ways, maybe, apart from poetry.

The last line in the press release text you sent over reads 'The linguistic form suffers language. The linguistic sculpture takes its cue from language.' Could you say a bit about what you mean by that?

I think all the time about an object without language, perhaps with no need for interpretation or that kind of hermeneutical approach of traditional art history. It's interesting to me to use writing, often to see if I can make it contradict itself, but also to make objects which promise language but obscure it through their objecthood. I like the idea that the object is almost just waiting to take its cue, that it is irrelevant until it is cued by language, language as a kind of aggression towards the object or the sculpture. In the past I've thought about the relationship of the bullet point to the language that comes after it. That bullet point on its own is a sculpture, often it feels like the sculpture has to be the thing in the margins and the language is the important stuff. The useful and open state of not-knowing is the victim of this playoff. I don't want to have to know too much about what I am doing, I feel very protective over being uncertain, unclear, difficult, all the things which right wing politics hates! I think there is an instinctive mistrust about being unclear, which is complicated but I think has its roots in the idea of being pretentious which I value almost more than anything. Dan Fox goes into this in his brilliant book *Pretentiousness: why it matters*. Not-knowing allows for a productive uncertainty in making, which is a space to think, spaces to think are all but disappeared today, I also feel strongly about my right to assume an intelligence in an audience, which is absolutely not elitist.

Thinking about not knowing; blocking and obscuring seem to be something you often work with. I'm thinking of *Blob Content* (2012) or the pieces that you did for the V&A and M_HKA Antwerp, *A lie for a sculpture Parts I & II* (2017) - delivering a lecture whilst blocking your face with a series of small sculptures.

I think a lot of that work was, and still is now, trying to interrupt or disrupt the relationship that the visual has with the verbal, to put it most simply, that is to try and interrupt the already quite set in stone relationships that one has with an object and language. I mean even just thinking of the V&A museum, and how one navigates that space, of course it is a great place to be and look around, but the hierarchies and frameworks often of language and the idea that the object is secondary, that they are somehow presumed dumb until they are brought to life with verbal language. Of course, that is necessary in a colonial museum, it comes with its own questionable agencies, but it happens with sculpture in general as well. I think of the formal things that are happening like, Trump's border wall between the US and Mexico it's an object, a sculpture if you like, but it's also a verbal device, it comes entirely from a linguistic way of thinking, which is to distinguish between one thing and another, to name and make strong boundaries and not allow fluidity. Obscuring those boundaries is a way to extend the possibilities of both language and sculpture, so that neither take over from each other and you can have more time to look. I also have sinus and nasal congestion problems, so quite often I am literally blocked when I am in the studio and lately I have begun to wonder about the accumulative effects of having a body and how a blocked nose relates to making sculpture, like a feeling of solidity. I've often thought of bo-geys as a form of cast of a place inside your face which is hidden.

In your work, there are often images and objects that recur. They pop up digitally in your video work and physically in your sculpture and they come into different assemblages, like the pebble for example. Maybe you could say a bit about the pebbles on the floor in this show? But also, just about the way things travel across different pieces.

The pebble comes from an older work, from the end of last year which was shown in Vienna, called *Conversations with the Makapansgat pebble* (2018) the original object, the Makapansgat pebble, is the earliest example of a manu-port, an object moved from its point of origin by early humans. It's a jasperite lump from around 3,000,000BC, found in a South African cave along with the bones of a pre-human. This was before the species could manufacture its own symbols or make sculpture, so the chips and markings accidentally resemble a face and it was collected and kept in perhaps the earliest example of symbolic thinking. There is something really exciting to me about that being a sculptural moment of recognition in something like a pebble, it almost compresses time, because I can completely relate to that person whoever they were, finding a nice pebble. While I was reproducing it, casting it, making it over and over again in different colours, I was thinking about the digital reproductions of the original photographs online. If you search for it on Google images you get a number of different coloured versions, so you cannot be sure of the true nature of the original. I think that somehow defines our time.

Published to coincide with
Luke McCreadie
A length of spit dangled from a mouth.

Designed by Phil Baines

Matt's Gallery
6-28 July 2019
92 Webster Road, London, SE16 4DF

Matt's Gallery is a registered charity, number 1169683

Generously supported by Arts Council England and Ron Henocq Fine Art



Supported using public funding by
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