

# Phelim Hoey (NL, 1984)

[www.phelim-hoey.nl](http://www.phelim-hoey.nl)

Amsterdam-based visual artist Phelim Hoey (b. 1984, NL/IE) studied documentary photography at the School of the Arts (HKU) in Utrecht, the Netherlands. Here, in his first days at art school, Hoey encountered a series of optical difficulties. These difficulties were among the early symptoms of MS, a neurological illness with which he was formally diagnosed a few months later. His practice would subsequently acquire new meaning as a possible agent of healing, offering an important creative outlet for studying his condition, as well as the potential for tracing the ever-changing relationship he experiences with his body.

Incorporating a varied range of media – whether photography, film, ceramics or sculptural installation – Hoey's work can be read as a form of conceptual storytelling. In fragile materials, or delicate still-lives depicting precariously-balanced objects, his works are wrought with a pronounced sense of vulnerability and tension. Small traces of annotated medical documents, obscured by fragmented sketching and images, recall clinical understandings of Hoey's condition: a distant language that rarely speaks to the nuances of his own experience. Elsewhere, Hoey deploys quasi-scientific studies of motion – referencing photographic pioneers like Eadward Muybridge and Etienne-Jules Marey – underlining yet further the separation he observes between the physical body and his broader sense of 'self'.

## ABOUT THE WORK

### 'Walking with a cane' (2018)

53,5 cm x 63,0 cm x 2,5 cm (print: 49,0 cm x 32,5 cm)

Framed c-print on paper

Autonomy and independence are considered important in western society, and is often a big part of one's identity. In my case, being diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis, it is no longer self-evident that the body carries out actions, sometimes not even the simplest. These experiences lead to alienation, fear and an instrumental vision towards the body. With the loss of the certainty of a functioning body, the identity is also compromised. Who I am, and how the disease influences my identity is something I explore in this project.

This framed c-print has the aura of old ages long passed by. The grey-tones and the crossings seem to give it something that reminds us of the start of the age of photography. Associations with cartography, archeology and even the work of Eadward Muybridge -who tried to capture movement in pictures, are an often made link. For me this seems to capture the concept of time; the passing of time, like a time-traveller.

Without further explaining the work I want to point out to the viewer that the photo is not a map, and not trick to capture movement or time. It is a way for me to measure who I am, how I move, how my body behaves and transforms with and without the influence of MS. Doing so this is some sort of self-research on the border of arts, emotions and science.