



Paul Mpagi Sepuya, *Darkroom Mirror* (\_2100135), 2017, archival pigment print, 32 x 24".

fraught relationship with identity categories.

In the remarkably affecting *Darkroom Mirror* (\_2100135), 2017, Sepuya looks through a camera as another naked man tenderly steadies his own. The photograph produced in and by this encounter betrays its own making with a sweetly humorous blockage in the foreground: The companion has gotten his finger in the way of Sepuya's lens. Other works suggest that despite his apparent embrace of transparency, Sepuya is also interested in something close to its opposite. Five closely related photographs—such as *Exposure* (\_2110004), 2017—shot through a gap in a thick, skin-like image, behind which slivers of the artist's body are visible, are obscure to the point of alienation. Sepuya draws us in with the promise of photographic revelation only to ultimately suggest that whatever his images have to offer is entirely contingent on our own erotically dialectical engagement with them.

CHICAGO

## Paul Mpagi Sepuya

DOCUMENT

1709 West Chicago avenue

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Paul Mpagi Sepuya figures a beguiling intimacy among the technologies that produce photographic meaning. Meticulously shot in mirror reflections, Sepuya's images manifest a gravid tension between the artist himself and his nude male subjects, the trappings of his studio, and the material stuff of photography itself. Works on view from four ongoing series—"Mirror Studies," "Darkroom" (both 2016–), "Figures," and "Exposures" (both 2017–)—attest to the structured and collaborative studio experimentation that characterizes his practice. The great pleasure and challenge of this work is in trying to decrypt its various pictorial logics: which bodies belong to whom, which parts of the images are pictures within the picture or reflected objects in the *mise-en-scène*. From the ambiguous fragments, a sense emerges of the relational and fugitive meaning of portrait photography and its

— Jared Quinton