ROT

REVIEW

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ROTOЯ

Review: Transdisciplinary Dialogue and Debate

The ROTOЯ partnership between Huddersfield Art Gallery and the University of Huddersfield was established in 2011. ROTOЯ I and II was a programme of eight exhibitions and accompanying events that commenced in 2012 and was completed in 2013. ROTOЯ continues into 2014 and the programme for 2015 and 2016 is already firmly underway. In brief, the aim of ROTOЯ is to improve the cultural vitality of Kirklees, expand audiences, and provide new ways for people to engage with and understand academic research in contemporary art and design.

Why ROTOЯ, Why Now?

As Vice Chancellors position their institutions' identities and future trajectories in context to national and international league tables, Professor John Goddard[1] proposes the notion of the 'civic' university as a 'place embedded' institution; one that is committed to 'place making' and which recognises its responsibility to engaging with the public. The civic university has deep institutional connections to different social, cultural and economic spheres within its locality and beyond.

A fundamental question for both the university sector and cultural organisations alike, including local authority, is how the many different articulations of public engagement and cultural leadership which exist can be brought together to form one coherent, common language. It is critical that we reach out and engage the community so we can participate in local issues, impact upon society, help to forge well-being and maintain a robust cultural economy.

Within the lexicon of public centered objectives sits the Arts Council England's strategic goals, and those of the Arts and Humanities Research Council – in particular its current Cultural Value initiative.[2] What these developments reveal is that art and design education and professional practice, its projected oeuvre as well as its relationship to cultural life and public funding, is now challenged with having to comprehensively audit its usefulness in financially austere times. It was in the wake of these concerns coming to light, and of the 2010 Government Spending Review that ROTOЯ was conceived.

These issues and the discussions surrounding them are not completely new. Research into the social benefits of the arts, for both the individual and the community, was championed by the Community Arts Movement in the 1960s. During the 1980s and '90s, John Myerscough[3] and Janet Wolff,[4] amongst others, provided significant debate on the role and value of the arts in the public domain. What these discussions demonstrated was a growing concern that the cultural sector could not, and should not, be understood in terms of economic benefit alone. Thankfully, the value of the relationships between art, education, culture and society is now recognised as being far more complex than the reductive quantification of their market and GDP benefits. Writing in 'Art School (Propositions for the 21st Century)', Ernesto Pujol proposes:

'…it is absolutely crucial that art schools consider their institutional role in support of democracy. The history of creative expression is linked to the history of freedom. There is a link between the state of artistic expression and the state of democracy.'[5]

When we were approached by Huddersfield Art Gallery to work collaboratively on an exhibition programme that could showcase academic staff research, one of our first concerns was to ask the

question, 'how can we really contribute to cultural leadership within the town?' The many soundbite examples of public engagement that we might underline within our annual reports or website news are one thing, but what really makes a difference to a town's cultural identity, and what affects people in their daily lives? With these questions in mind we sought a distinctive programme within the muncipal gallery space, that would introduce academic research in art, design and architecture beyond the university in innovative ways. It was important for ROTOЯ to be consistent with the composition of the school and our academic profession, which resulted in the exhibition of design and architecture, alongside the more familiar contemporary art exhibitions. With a desire to demonstrate our commitment to research and the School's portfolio, while presenting work in an accessible and engaging way, ROTOЯ inevitably became eclectic in its programming.[6] Griselda Pollock's essay, included in this review, teases out some of these issues when it asks:

'Can artists as researchers use the [public] exhibition space as a laboratory for research?'

So what do we mean by 'research' in the context of a public centred exhibition programme? ROTOЯ brings together a breadth of research cultures, characterised by epistemological debate on what constitutes knowledge, in addition to, creative practices that focus upon the making, designing and studying of new artefacts and aesthetic experiences. In epistemological terms, ROTOЯ can be described as generating a live tension between explicit, propositional knowledge and tacit intelligence, as well as promoting experiential knowledge and the critical review of all these claims.

There is an ongoing perception in the UK that STEM (science, technology, engineering and mathematics) subjects deserve greater research focus than non-STEM subjects. A functional definition of a good university education is all too readily linked to employment statistics, where STEM subjects often come out on top, and which in turn can be directly linked to the immediate needs of the economy. The underlying question that emerges here is how research in art, design and architecture might respond to the changes taking place in the university sector, in the economy, and across society more broadly? It was within this context that we wanted to stimulate a discussion through ROTOЯ on how art, design and architecture might directly contribute to societal needs, a question which incorporates an understanding of the cultural value of our work across these subject areas. In addition, we have a prerogative to make academic research more transparent.

One of the main challenges we found was in aligning our research objectives with those of a municipal gallery; whose exhibitions have to be publicly-aware and accessible to all. Through ROTOЯ we perceived these challenges as a positive frisson which brought different sensibilities and expectations together towards a joint aim. Therefore, from the outset, the partnership introduced a model for interpreting and accessing each exhibition. These included: Gallery staff and University staff working together on exhibition interpretation; a public presentation by each exhibitor during the preview night; reading groups which were formed around each exhibition; and a student ambassador programme – to enable students to be trained, briefed and timetabled to give public tours about their tutors' work. Exhibitions also featured a related film night held in the gallery, as well as educational workshops and bespoke visitor feedback channels.

A key objective for ROTOЯ was to create dialogue and debate with the Gallery's existing audience, and at the same time develop a new audience, perhaps one from further afield. In the spirit of ROTOЯ we especially welcomed audiences that valued discussion and contestation in the arts. Kimiyo Rickett Assistant Director of Kirklees Communities and Leisure has stated:

'I think that the partnership has been successful in demonstrating that there's a potential for really doing something. It's definitely got me [feeling] very positive [in terms of] thinking ''we need to do more of this''.'[7]

It is widely assumed that a strong cultural infrastructure is a panacea to urban regeneration, enabling the revitalisation of communities through cultural engagement, which simultaneously promotes economic prosperity. As a general rule, artists like to live amongst a vibrant arts culture, and a greater concentration of artists and arts-related organisations within a particular locale will lead to higher degrees of arts participation among the local community; directly through participatory workshops as well as audience membership. A well-established gallery with a varied, cosmopolitan, exhibition programme, employing professional staff trained in public engagement is more likely to draw visitors and tourists from outside the region than a local community arts programme that predominantly features local artists. A strong and varied exhibition programme, with a supporting professional infrastructure, will therefore have a greater economic impact to the locale by building social and cultural capital, as well as a sense of community pride and distinct self-image. Research also concludes that public participation in the arts can improve both the physical and psychological well-being of the community.

Can artists as researchers use the [public] exhibition space as a laboratory for research?

Herbert Marcuse argued that the role and knowledge of the artist is a complex problem in contemporary society. The more alienated people are from their inner needs, he suggested, the more fragmented they are in relation to the society in which they live and work. Likewise, the more society becomes alienated from the experience of art, the more people may reject it on the grounds of it being too obscure to benefit daily life.[8] This is the artist's dilemma, and a dilemma that still faces art and design education today. Daniel Buren points out:

' […] anyone who has the courage and the foolhardiness to show what they have done to others, and in public on top of that, opens the door to analyses, to commentaries, to criticisms and to praise.' [9]

Providing inclusive opportunity for conversation was central to ROTOЯ 's rationale. Pollock notes in her essay:

'Artistic practice as research takes us through the specificities of a singular practice as a means of thinking the world. By means of the jumps that can be made through combination, juxtaposition and transition, the creation of images and the montage of elements, new connections are forged.'.

ROTOЯ reflects the multifaceted nature of our intentions, its title at once a palindrome and a metaphor. Like a möbius strip it aims to achieve a non-hierarchical, cyclical shape to its conception and form – on how to make new connections so that creative and conceptual work, which is underpinned by academic research, can be accessible and affect a public and their locale.

We relished the idea of bringing colleagues' work to Huddersfield. Much of the art and design work has already been shown in a variety of international arenas or in other national venues within the UK, but it had never been shown collectively in Huddersfield, which is where our practice is carried out. In this respect we wanted the programme to be seen as a critical investment to our students, colleagues and the town. In a sense we are bringing the work 'home'. We imagined ROTOЯ as a dynamic propeller blade refreshing and responding to the culture around it; like a lung it both inhales and exhales. Our manifesto became:

ROTOЯ is both inward and outward facing; airing specialist research practices in art, design and architecture; moving between the concerns of the academic community towards the Huddersfield town locale and broader public.

Art and design education and research, by itself, will not resolve local issues, and it probably does not have the capability to change society in a direct way. However, in its broad contribution to cultural leadership, and the impact this creates upon civil society, we believe ROTOЯ has the capacity to stimulate debate and the imagination of the women and men who can influence and respond to local needs. In this respect we began to think of ROTOЯ in the context of 'place making', and a programme that shares the aspirations of citizenship education; to stimulate the cognitive experience that promotes the growth of individuals with respect to their creative, communal and civic capacities. The title of ROTOЯ thus encapsulates how the two institutions (the University of Huddersfield and Kirklees local authority) might effectively work together; or revolve around each other through collaboration and cooperation.

Continuity and Change

One of the challenges we continue to encounter with ROTOЯ is finding a balance in the programme that enables accessibility as well as artistic freedom and contestation, which is fundamental to both education, creative practice and the cultural vitality of a region. The pedagogical practices and legacies adopted within 1960/70s art schools naturally aligned themselves to the notion of the 'radical'; someone who is prepared to challenge institutional norms to find alternative ways of thinking, and stands in support of difference. From this perspective Jim McGuigan proposed the role of the avant-garde in professional practice and teaching was 'not purely visual, how could it be? – but visual ideological.'[10] Similarly, art critic J. J. Charlesworth writes:

'One thing we have to much of at the moment, both in art and society, is a forced sense that collaboration, participation and engagement are in themselves a "good thing". And, what we don't have enough of is a sense that the freedom to disagree and conflict with one another, in public, is fundamental to any democratic society.'[11]

Today, art and design education is seemingly less ideological and less radicalised, as current pedagogy orientates itself towards the relational and corporate; negotiating a common curriculum that normally adopts transferable employability skills, academic research, manual skills training, technological training and marketing. This raises the question of what constitutes the pedagogical concept of the art and design school today, and the critical and physical requirements for educating the next generation of creative practitioners in relation to preserving democratic society?

ROTOЯ reflects the multifaceted nature of our intentions, its title at once a palindrome and a metaphor

Back in 2004 Charlesworth also proposed the most important aspect in the debate between art education and society is identifying the 'critical rallying points around which a younger generation of practitioners might form themselves as a constituency'.[12]

Nicholas Bourriuad's Relational Aesthetics sensibility, now so prevalent in the art school curriculum, suggests conviviality and community engagement is now the mark of the publicly engaged artist, where artists' 'good deeds', or community events, are aesthetic ised into a relational culture. In 2002 Bourriaud writes:

'Social utopias and revolutionary hopes have given way to everyday micro-utopias and imitative strategies, any stance that is "directly" critical of society is futile, if based on the illusion of a marginality that is nowadays impossible, not to say regressive.'[13]

Bourriaud's point is that actively being 'local' is crucially important; that the artist needs to be placed in a micro-politics of difference and to participate in the organisation of communal needs. Pujol perhaps best sums up the relational turn art education has taken over the last twenty years when he writes:

'Although art education is a site-specific process and cultural product, I share my field notes, which I have organised into three specific categories: the curriculum, the faculty, and the community.'[14]

In his writings, Bourriaud brings subjectivity into play to defend the strategy of 'Relational Aesthetics' as a protector of difference in society – which he suggests is a key component of civil society. He argues that human subjectivity must be seized and enhanced in order to resist a rigid colonisation of the powers that be. Repreatedly quoting Felix Guattari, Bourriaud asserts a 'chaotic' subjectivity is necessary to promote emancipation from political institutionalisation.[15] Subjectivity cannot exist in an independent way, it can only exist in the chaotic pairing of human groups, and working locally with others in different systems of knowledge exchange.

In addition to our partnership with Huddersfield Art Gallery, in 2012 we also formed a partnership with the ICA (Institute of Contemporary Arts)in London. The ICA has since worked collaboratively with the University in developing joint projects and research designed to engage and promote greater fluidity and collaborative opportunities between university students, teaching staff and the ICA's public programme. In May 2013 we hosted a symposium at the ICA that addressed the ways in which recognisable impact, beyond academia, could be achieved through the effective delivery, measurement and dissemination of public engagement activity across art and design practices. The ICA partnership is of interest to the ROTOЯ programme because of its innovative and challenging programme of visual arts, contemporary music, international cinema, performance, live arts, talks and debates, all of which provide models to extend our research in, and practices of, public engagement. Of particular interest is the ICA's Student Forum which encourages long-term engagement between the organisation and emerging practitioners. One of its key aims is to 'interrogate, subvert and re-define traditional pedagogical terminology in response to academic research and public engagement with art, within the context of an arts institution'.[16]

The ROTOЯ programme mirrors some of these elements and, like the ICA partnership, provides opportunities for creative exchange, investigation and discussion between practitioners and audiences, as well as a fruitful dialogue with students engaged in critical thinking around contemporary practice, notions of informal learning, as well as formulating new ideas and theories.[17]

To conclude, universities are perceived as key economic and cultural drivers and are increasingly significant deliverers of cultural experiences to the public: Many of the UK's leading artists and designers, which include our colleagues, are employed by the university sector while being engaged in public-centred professional practice.

ROTOЯ has now established its own identity and presence in the Kirklees community: Responses from visitors have been very encouraging, and show people to be taking something positive from their experience of encountering art and design research in a municipal gallery environment. However, interestingly, it has been difficult for visitors – and equally for ourselves – to be able to explain exactly what it was that has caused, or comprised, these positive experiences. This problem has influenced much of our current research, and future research plans include the development of a project which will consider how the inclusion of other disciplines, for example cognitive psychology, might be used to test the immediate experience of art and design, in terms of its impacts upon individuals and society.[18]. It is with this in mind that we want to find a way of helping people to understand what they are experiencing through ROTOЯ , and to use the experience to enter into a deeper conversation with us, with others in the community, and with themselves, in the context of being culturally embedded.

Many of the UK's leading artists and designers are employed by universities

Notes

1 Emeritus Professor of Regional Development Studies at the Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies, Newcastle University.
2 Examples include: the AHRC funded project, Beyond the Campus: Higher Education and the Creative Economy and art 'activism' demonstrated recently by Crescent Arts and Bob and Roberta Smith's event The Art Party Conference @ The Spa Scarborough (2013).
3 Myerscough, J. (1988), 'The economic importance of the arts in Britain', Policy Studies Institute, London.
4 Wolff, J. (1993), The Social Production of Art, London: Macmillan.
5 Pujol, E., 'On the Ground: Practical Observations for Regenerating Art Education' in Madoff, S.H. (2009), ART SCHOOL (PROPOSITIONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY): MIT Press, pp.1-14.
6 Architecture exhibitions are planned for 2015/16.
7 Interview conducted with Dr. Anna Powell (July 2013).
8 Marcuse, H. (1978), The Aesthetic Dimension, Boston: Beacon Press, p.6. Quoted in Becker, C. (ed) (1994), 'Herbert Marcuse and the Subversive Potential of Art' in The Subversive Imagination: Artists, Society and Social Responsibility, London: Routledge, p.116.
9 Buren, D. (1997), 'can art get down from its pedestal and rise to the street level?' in Sculpture. Projects in Munster, p483.
10 McGuigan, J. (1996), Culture and the Public Sphere, London: Routledge, McGuigan addresses cultural policy as a manifestation of cultural politics, cultural policy and education initiatives in Britain, United States and Australia.
11 Charlesworth, J. J., 'Art & Beauty' in Art Monthly (September 2004, No. 279), p.7.
12 ibid.
13 Bourriaud, N. (2002), Relational Aesthetics, (trans) Pleasance, S. & Woods, les presses du réel, p.31.
14 Pujol, E., 'On the Ground: Practical Observations for Regenerating Art Education' in Madoff, S.H. (2009), ART SCHOOL (PROPOSITIONS FOR THE 21ST CENTURY): MIT Press, pp.1-14.
15 Guattari, F., Chaosmosis: An ethicoaesthetic paradigm, Indiana Press, Quoted in Bourriaud, N. (2002), Relational Aesthetics, (trans) Simon Pleasance & Fronza Woods, les presses du réel, p.101.
16 Upham, S., Associate Curator, Education, speaking at the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, January 2013.
17 Ibid.
18 Reber, R., 'Art in Its Experience: Can Empirical Psychology Help Assess Artistic Value?' Leonardo, Vol. 41, No. 4 (August 2008): 367-372.

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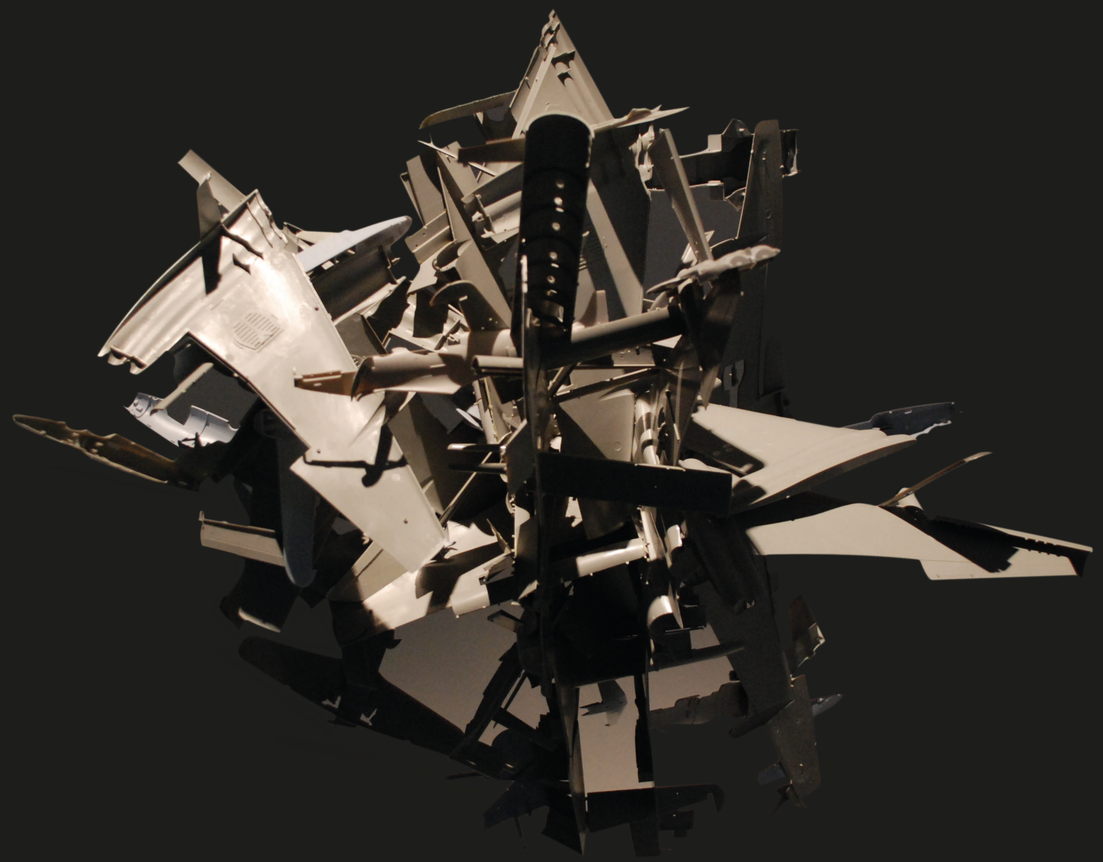


Image © Lisa Stansbie

Lisa Stansbie

Flight
28 January - 24 March 2012
Reviewed by Peter Suchin

'Fragments of a vessel which are to be glued together must match one another in the smallest details, although they need not be like one another.' - Walter Benjamin[1]

Lisa Stansbie's Flight brings to mind either a complex jigsaw puzzle or detective novel – both forms of representation where the image, structure or story requires the commitment and sensitivity of the reader-participant for its completion. Whilst such an active collaborator is necessary with respect to any and all works of art, one's consciousness of the participatory requirements of Stansbie's work is an implicit feature of its construction.[2] This is both an attractive aspect of her practice, giving the viewer a heightened role in the work's fabrication, and, arguably, a frightening or disturbing one. The viewer may ask if indeed they are capable of making the work *work*; of setting the machine in motion so as to generate a comprehensible assemblage of interlocking parts. Stansbie's multipart installations require not so much a reader or viewer as a performer or interpreter. In The Open Work, Umberto Eco makes reference to works of art involving: processes which, instead of relying on a univocal, necessary sequence of events, prefer to disclose a field of possibilities, to create 'ambiguous' situations open to all sorts of operative choices and interpretations.[3]

Stansbie's playful but precise staging of multiple elements seem most aptly described by Eco's remark. A few lines from Georges Perec's disquisition on jigsaw puzzles may also be helpful here: with such puzzles the individual:

'[...] element's existence does not precede the existence of the whole, it comes neither before nor after it, for the parts do not determine the pattern, but the pattern determines the parts: knowledge of the pattern and of its laws, of the set and its structure, could not possibly be derived from discrete knowledge of the elements that compose it.'[4]

To apply these observations to Stansbie's Flight is to suggest that decipherment of the broader picture is what one should aim for – each individual component being, simultaneously, a kind of mystery or puzzle within itself and a clue to a higher or more extensive

fabrication. This is not, however, to claim that Flight embodies a single, simple or true meaning waiting in the wings, as it were, to be realised and recognised. The ambiguity inherent in Flight's title is to be taken seriously: a flight or journey towards a specific place or position, but also a zigzagging or shifting about, a path or staircase, as the act of a displacement or escape.

The jigsaw analogy becomes considerably more complicated when one begins to classify the individual elements the artist employs.[5] For example, Airfix models of aircraft are clearly a central signifier in the projected chain of meanings triggered by the work. They are microcosmic renditions of military or civilian craft themselves made up of multiple, mass-produced units. One might regard them as three-dimensional jigsaws insofar as the order in which they are to be assembled is determined by what they represent. Yet Stansbie undermines their representational function in a number of ways, notably by connecting together the components in a deliberately disorderly way, perhaps combining pieces from several individual kits into a single representational (though 'abstract') field. Additionally the kits are employed as 'readymade' elements by being wall-mounted as complete kits. To place the pristine kit upon the wall in this fashion, giving an equal status to both the projected craft and the supporting structure in which individual components are held is, in fact, to refuse the hierarchy of the model and its attached packaging, instead drawing attention to what is literally the frame of the plane through keeping the manufacturer's utilitarian arrangement of the parts intact. Having noted that Stansbie gives the audience some considerable work to do in asking them to gather together and productively order the diverse parts of her installations, one should also bear in mind the contradictions involved in her own act of refusal with respect to putting together, in their intended order, each individual plane. Instead, Stansbie presents the models as diagrams of themselves arranged in series as huge wall drawings. Nicholson Baker's text 'Model Airplanes' discusses the seductive beauty of such 'untouched', unbroken components: 'Straight from the store', Baker remarks,

'[...] these kits are museums, Kremlins and Smithsonians of the exploded view, wherein you may fully and rapturously attend to a single airplane, which exists planarly, neatly espaliered, arranged not by aerodynamic or military function, but by the need for an orderly flow of hot plastic through the polished cloisters of the mold in which it was formed [...]. Some of the pieces don't even offer up their final disposition at first glance: the truth – that they are relatively unconvincing bits of cockpit décor, or segments of a petty canard – would only cause unhappiness were you to actually engage with the kit and prove its necessary unfaithfulness to the real fighter.'[6]

Stansbie takes these museological moulds and returns them to their erstwhile diagrammatic condition in the Airfix factory drawing office. But arranged in large numbers on the wall they no longer comply even with the mock realism to which Baker alludes; they lose the sense of being the parts of planes about to be released and reconfigured into miniature aircraft, becoming instead fanciful energy flows, wiring systems, hieroglyphics awaiting the eventual arrival of a Champollion, a Ventris or a Sherlock Holmes.[7]

If the model aircraft invokes the child in his bedroom, hobbies, and nostalgia for ostensibly pointless pursuits, then the presence of The Wings, an actual-size bar complete with convincing-looking liquor, glasses, a chair, beer mats and other sundry bric-a-brac, suggests the adult pleasures of alcoholic inebriation and a different kind of distortion to the misassembling (or non-assembling) of plastic models. In the public house one discusses this or that, argues one's corner, becomes a kind of philosopher, an amateur sleuth attempting to unravel the workings of the world. But The Wings is something of a museum within a museum – the one thing one might desperately require from a bar is that it actually serve some real drinks. This model bar, life-size though it is, might well be a scaled-up plastic kit. Whereas the Airfix

planes make no pretence of their status as mere representations of actual machines The Wings' deceptive positioning reminds us that

Image © Lisa Stansbie

things might not be as they seem. As Brian Spiller observes: 'the trade of public houses is peculiarly sensitive to environmental disturbance', an epithet one may also apply, certainly in a positive and critically supportive sense, to Lisa Stansbie's Flight.[8]

Notes

1. Benjamin, W. (1973), 'The Task of the Translator' in Benjamin, W., Illuminations, Fontana, p. 78.

2. On the importance of the reader or viewer's creative participation in the work of art see Duchamp, M., 'The Creative Act', in Sanouillet, M., & Peterson, E.. (eds.) (1975), The Essential Writings of Marcel Duchamp, Thames and Hudson, and also Barthes, R, 'The Death of the Author', in Barthes, R. (1977), Image-Music-Text, Fontana.

3. Eco, U. (1989), The Open Work, London, Hutchinson Radius, p. 44.

4. Perec, G. (1987), 'Preamble' to Life A User's Manual, Collins Harvill, p. xv.

5. The jigsaw puzzle was invented by Spilsbury, J. (1739-1769) in 1767 as an educational toy. See Hannas, L. (1972), The English Jigsaw Puzzle 1760-1890, Wayland, for a detailed history of the form. Stansbie scrambles the parts of the Airfix aeroplanes, mixing together components from different kits, but all the various parts of Flight might be regarded as pieces of the broader 'puzzle', so that in a sense the work is in fact comprised of puzzles within puzzles, the whole of the installation being akin to an archaeological dig in which some of the found materials (may) have been restored in a questionable or uncertain manner. The viewer is therefore asked to consider the act of taking apart the 'evidence' as much as 'merely' arranging it into a meaningful order.

6. Baker, N., 'Model Airplanes', in Baker, N., (1997) The Size of Thoughts, Vintage, pp. 30-31.

7. Jean-Francois Champollion (1790-1832) decoded, in 1822, the hieroglyphs on the Rosetta Stone, now in the British Museum; Michael Ventris (1922-1956) was responsible, in 1952, for the decoding of the Cretan script known as Linear B. For an account of both these major acts of decipherment see Doblhofer, E. (1973), Voices in Stone, Paladin. Arthur Conan Doyle's fictional detective, Sherlock Holmes, first appeared in print in 1887.

8. Spiller, B. (1972), Victorian Public Houses, David & Charles, p. 7

Image © Jamie Collier

Kevin Almond and Kathryn Brennand

Insufficient Allure: The Art of Creative Pattern Cutting
7 April - 2 June 2012
Reviewed by Brenda Polan

Perhaps the most arresting aspect of this stimulating exhibition is the feedback from the public, the consumers of fashion rather than the makers. There's a sense of revelation and wonder to the comments they leave behind. These outsiders are being let into a fashion-insiders' secret, the alchemy at the heart of one of the most glamorous industries in the world. Led to believe that the journey from designer's sketch pad to model's back is a short and easy one, they are suddenly introduced to the engineering, to the technical skill, to the disciplined mastery of line and volume, to the measuring and pinning, to the problem-solving, rule-breaking and innovation that turns concepts into clothes. They are meeting the pattern-cutter.

Along with some fairly repetitive superlatives -- fantastic, amazing, stunning, breathtaking -- gallery-goers use the words, insight, illuminating, inspired and inspiring, intricate, whimsical, subtle, complex, challenging, eclectic, weird, dramatic and sculptural. The small collection of archive black dresses demonstrates how cut is fashion is historical moment. And then the calico toiles by final-year students that are the heart of exhibition reveal with great clarity the structure of the garments they have designed, a structure that out in the world, on a catwalk or in a shop window, is usually obscured by the texture, colour and pattern of the fabric, by the decorations, trims and notions used for the finished garment. Of course, the magically complex garments in the exhibition are not in the normal run of clothing. They are bravura displays of the lyrical possibilities of the pattern-cutter's art. Many are simply beautiful but others have wit and mischief, putting one in mind of those great experimental pattern-cutters, the Japanese. It is no accident that one of the strongest influences on young pattern-cutters is Prof Tomoko Nakamichi of Bunka Fashion College in Tokyo whose Pattern Magic and Pattern Magic 2 books (Laurence King Publishing) are required reading for all students of fashion for here are many, many ways to create flattery, illusion and mischief.

From Issey Miyake's independent-life, bouncy dancing dresses and 'transformer' garments – now one thing, now with the shrug of the shoulders, quite another – to Rei Kawakubo's deconstructed, reconstructed 'interventions in space' and Yohji Yamamoto's spherical body cages and beyond to the next generation of Japanese designers, these are designers who understand pattern-cutting and work hip to hip with their pattern-cutters developing endlessly enchanting

novelties which use the human body as an armature just as a sculptor does – or as a frame just as an architect would.

In his book exploring the close relationship between architecture and fashion, The Fashion of Architecture, Bradley Quinn quotes the architect and theorist of the Modern Movement, Adolf Loos' 1898 essay, 'The Principle of Dressing' in which he asserts the primacy of the construction of clothing in mankind's creative struggle for shelter. Young architects, he suggested, should study textiles and clothing. 'This is the correct and logical path to be followed in architecture. It was in this sequence that mankind learned how to build. In the beginning was dressing.' Quinn comments, 'Irrespective of their modern permutations and respective roles as micro- and macro-structures, both disciplines remain rooted to the basic task of enclosing space around the human form.'[1]

There was a time back in the twentieth century when the most interesting fashion designers seemed to have studied for a degree in architecture -- Pierre Cardin, Roberto Capucci, Paco Rabanne, Gianfranco Ferré, Gianni Versace, Tom Ford – and their happy preoccupation with structure was very clear. But even those with a more conventional fashion education or with none, have acknowledged the pre-eminence of structure, for without it, where is shape, silhouette and volume? Where is eye-catching difference? Where is innovation? Where is fashion? The great innovators have not been sketchpad men or women; they have got down and dirty with seams and tucks, darts and interfaces. Look closely at the work of Paul Poiret, Madeleine Vionnet, Cristobal Balenciaga, Charles James, Christian Dior, John Galliano, Hussein Chalayan, Alexander McQueen and you will find the same intensity of attention to spatial experimentation, to boundary-stretching and rule-breaking.

All of these have, however, been supported in their work by an overlooked cohort of craftsmen and craftswomen whose training and tradition is not that of the fashion designer. Embedded in the atelier system of apprenticeships that paralleled very closely that of other trades and guilds, they were ever part of the infantry marching to the word of the general with the sketchpad. Yet I have born witness in my time as a fashion journalist to the despair of designers whose pattern-cutter has been poached and the eternal feuds that have been waged between the poacher and the betrayed bereft. In my innocence I had wondered at the passions thus aroused and had been set right about the importance of the right pattern-cutter. The late Jean Muir campaigned tirelessly for greater respect and credit to be accorded to these essential technicians whose skill and imagination brings so much to the creative process. 'You see,' she told me again and again, 'it is a dying profession. Everyone wants to be a designer. No one wants to be a pattern-cutter. There's no glory in it. We are educating too many designers who don't know how to cut a sleeve and not enough great technicians. We will regret it.'[2]

There were two possible routes for the educationists to take. Make pattern-cutting the bedrock upon which their fashion design degrees are built – or as, Anne Tyrrell, Chair of the British Fashion Council's Student Forum, suggested in 1999, 'We must try to glamorise the field.'[3] Or maybe both.

The dual approach demonstrated by Kevin Almond in the work of this exhibition and the forthcoming Creative Cut Symposium is a substantial and exciting step forward; the work in the show very much gives the game away. It is both creative and technically accomplished. These finalists will make great designers or brilliant pattern-cutters. The Symposium will set itself to solve many of the problems surrounding this issue where the credit for creativity is publicly vested in one star 'designer name' and denied to all the members of the support team. I remember an event at Central Saint Martin's a couple of year ago when the journalist, Sarah Mower, was slated to conduct a conversation with Marc Jacobs before an auditorium packed with design students. Waiting for it to start, we were surprised when two extra chairs were suddenly thrust on to the stage. Jacobs had insisted his shoe designer and his handbag designer accompanied him into the spotlight, giving credit where it is so rarely given, and enchanting the students who so desperately want to go work for him.

It could be taken as a long overdue beginning. Commercial enterprises that transfer star designers in the way of football teams but with less civility may not be about to hand out public accolades and vast salaries to the pattern cutter but a system where there is a greater understanding – not least and initially among the fashion press and bloggerati – of the input of the skilled and creative supporting cast is an excellent goal to be working for. Understandably, the young, ambitious and fashion-besotted will not long for a career as a pattern-cutter until that profession's status is raised from ankle-length to somewhere, more flirtily, above the knee.

Notes

1 Quinn, B. (2003), The Fashion of Architecture, Berg.
2 Muir, J. in conversation with Brenda Polan.
3 Tyrrell, A. (29th May 1999), British Fashion Council, Drapers Record.

Image © Jamie Collier

Barber Swindells

Mining Couture
16 June - 11 August 2012
Reviewed by Robert Clark

Mining Couture is neither one thing nor another. It is neither here nor there. On entering the installation an appropriate response might be bemusement. It is not clear what kind of exhibition this is. Despite the obligatory wall-mounted introductory texts, the visitor is left uncertain as to where the artist Barber Swindells (in fact the collaborative duo Claire Barber and Steve Swindells) is coming from, what she/he is getting at, what the point of the show is.

On closer inspection and reflection one can identify a mix-up of all kinds of disparate disciplines. There are elements of clothes design, drawing, documentary video, photography, sculpture, nature studies, bouncy castle construction, social anthropology. There are references to the posh finesse of haute couture and to the nitty-gritty grind of the mining industry. It's staged in a gallery so it must be art, but it's far from evident what kind of art we are dealing with here.

A video monitor features a collage of fragments ranging through The Pitman Poets, National Coal Queen poses, dressmaking sessions and colliery closures. In an adjacent room a video is projected in blurred focus like an animated Gerhard Richter. On the sidewalls there's an ink and crayon sketch of 24 Hours at the Coalface by Malcolm East and, for some reason, a framed snap of a bull. A glass topped museum vitrine contains an assortment of leather glove exhibits including an exquisite miniature pair, no larger than a fingernail or two. A caption informs us that in 1865 the Yeovil area was producing 421,000 dozen pairs of gloves a year and that fifteen to twenty women, mostly working from home, would be involved in sewing each pair. A notice-board wall is a mass of scraps: dressmaking patterns, sketchbook pages, iconic publicity shots of Marilyn Monroe and Marlon Brando, notes from a countryside trek: '12th October 2011 2oz of acorns picked from a single oak tree by the road to fishing pond.'

Then there are the enigmatic central exhibits. One to Twenty reproduces the design of a fireman's leather glove (properly named a Firemaster) on a gigantic scale as a deflated inflatable playground sculpture. Ventilation Dress is a full-scale reproduction of an auxiliary fan (also known as a booster fan) used to boost the air supply to new coal mine seams. This sculptural fan however appears to breathe rhythmically and is clothed in a blue floral dress which is apparently an exact copy of the pattern of a dress once proudly worn by one Margaret Dominiak, the National Coal Queen for 1972. The wall-mounted texts draw my attention to the resemblance between the fan's form and a human lung and mention conceptual clues of interconnection such as 'seams' and 'fresh air', but this could well mystify me even further.

And of course the puzzle gradually emerges as the whole point. Barber Swindells' art isn't meant to mean one thing, to argue an issue, to illustrate a thesis. Its shifting focus and slipping form is a deliberate attempt to open up connections, to ask questions that are at times as imaginatively and even irreverently playful as they are academically seriously and soberly researched. Just fancy coming across that breathing Ventilation Dress spot lit only by a helmet-mounted torch in an otherwise pitch-darkened mine shaft. Try to draw a narrative trajectory between Ventilation Dress and a photograph of Marilyn Monroe with her dress lifted around her thighs by the updraft from a New York subway grill. Then connect these to those petite kidskin gloves and a jotting that reads 'Blackberries picked from Snibston "spoil."'. Then again realize that this developing scenario is factually informed by the information that Pit Brow Lass dresses were traditionally dyed from natural sources collected at Snibston spoil heap, thus affording the local women a very particular look. Something resembling poetry starts to resonate.

Image © Steve Swindells

Image © Steve Swindells

The most clearly clashing elements of Barber Swindells' works lie in the traditionally mutually exclusive genres of craft design and fine art. One is supposed to deal with practicalities and aesthetic pleasantries, the other with wayward flights of utterly non-utilitarian reverie. Then there's the clash between the clear-cut responsibilities of sociological research and the open-ended improvisations of creative experiment. A further series of dislocations result from the fact that much of the Barber Swindells' work was originally created as part of site-specific commissions and residencies at Snibston Discovery Museum and Yeovil Glove Factory before being installed within the culturally hallowed confines of Huddersfield Art Gallery. It's almost as if the artists are attempting to creatively curate their own past work within this very different context. So, if the work looks somewhat out of place, it's perhaps because in fact it is.

Intrepidly, Barber Swindells put differing things together to see what happens, what thoughts and interesting quandaries might be catalyzed. This is an art of 'what if?' The art of collage and assemblage has of course a long history stretching back through the twentieth century and beyond. When the surrealists championed Count de Lautréamont's chance meeting on an operating table of a sewing machine and an umbrella they recognised an utterly new kind of marvelous beauty. The willed hybrids of surrealism might look somewhat predictable by now, but the aesthetics and thematic implications of collage remain one of the most potent trends of twenty-first century art. The centre no longer holds. Specialisms are only validified by a broader focus. Our universities are increasingly informed by multi-cultural and cross-associational studies. Mixed and multi-media artists proliferate and often blur the boundaries between documentary fact and fictional make-believe. On a daily basis perception is bombarded by more images and text fragments than at any time during the whole of human history. Artists put this next to that and the other to see what imaginative spark might link the space between them.

If the visitor to Mining Couture initially finds the show bewildering, maybe it's because we live in a state of bewildering cultural multiplicities. The health of our cultural ecology depends on drawing imaginative interrelationships. It's a matter of disorientation and reorientation, of thinking things through anew. Barber Swindells, like any artists worthy of the name, mirror aspects of the world in which we live. Today.

Ego, 1969, image detail © Patrick Procktor, courtesy of the Redfern Gallery, London.

Ian Massey

Patrick Procktor: Art and Life
25 August - 10 November 2012
Reviewed by Philip Vann

The Patrick Procktor retrospective exhibition at Huddersfield Art Gallery in 2012 gave an overall impression of an artist of profound distinction and achievement rooted in an integrity sustained over several decades (paradoxically evident even during his final years which were blighted by alcoholism and loneliness). Here was a probing portraitist of compassionate acuity, an authentic chronicler of his radically changing times, and a colourist of rare originality, audacity and grace. He possessed a quality which the painter John Craxton described as 'the chic of facility' – an uncanny ability to evoke a person, a place, a creature, still-life or a milieu with a gliding freshness; a disciplined spontaneity revealed in, say, a fluctuating watercolour wash impeccably expressing the languorous figure of a young man reclining in sensual repose.

The art world reputation that had gathered around him over the years condensed in a kind of flamboyant frivolity and flippancy; a veneer of dilettante dilatoriness caused his true artistic standing to be gradually obscured and occluded, even at times critically undermined. (However, he did retain many faithful, appreciative collectors and supporters, not least London's Redfern Gallery which successfully exhibited his work throughout his career). The Huddersfield exhibition, along with Ian Massey's 2010 monograph on the artist enabled us to realise – or at least to recall – that Procktor is an artist who we can, and should, take seriously, capable of awakening subtly pleasurable insights.

Procktor's first exhibition at the Redfern Gallery in 1963 as a Slade graduate was a critical and commercial triumph; the critic Edwin

Mullins then noted, 'When I first saw his work some two months ago I was immediately struck that here was an artist of real stature.'[2] Fifty or so years on, encountering this lifetime survey, our responses can now be as refreshingly open and vivid as Mullins' were then, unhindered by decades of relative critical neglect and misunderstandings, and the kinds of snidely homophobic prejudices that too frequently marred the reception of his work over the years. I for one now happily concur with Mullins' original evaluation.

His early '60s paintings have many sparkling, inventive intimations of an innately graceful sensibility in their depiction of balletic male nudes. These qualities may seem submerged under a weight of sombre impasto and the heavy existential seriousness and convoluted compositional complexities of a young 'very tall, gangling, firework-display'[3] of an artist (as the renowned writer and curator Bryan Robertson characterised him) finding his way.

A delightful wing of the Huddersfield exhibition – though a centrally revealing one – was a wall of paintings (from the Kirklees Collection) by modern British artists who had inspired Procktor: an enchanting still-life by Christopher Wood; a vibrant mountainscape by David Bomberg; a fiercely tender assembly of male nudes in a Keith Vaughan gouache; and a tersely magisterial overview of The Antique Room at the Slade (1953) by Robert Medley. Bomberg's example as a neglected visionary genius permeated Procktor's experience at the Slade. Keith Vaughan never taught Procktor there but they became close friends. Procktor wrote, 'I was very, very excited by his painting. I thought it was beautiful [...] He was the best painter of the male nude.'[4]

Procktor's meticulously pared-down though sometimes ecstatically diaphanous portraits from the mid-'60s onwards were rooted in the sense of joyous liberation embraced in the period. In one portrait of a psychedelic green-and-yellow scarved Jimi Hendrix, the musician's Afro hair is miraculously conjured up in a wild black watercolour wash. In a 1969 portrait in which Procktor's handsome, pop star aspirant boyfriend Gervase Griffiths is seen absorbed in music on his headphones, the vibrant though miniscule detail of a single Moroccan Slipper (the picture's title) perhaps hints at the phantasmagoric inner world Gervase has access to. The tactile and empathetic fluency, 'the chic of facility' of such pictures is surely equal to that achieved in Hockney's more renowned portraits from the same period – as in Hockney's own large acrylic portrait of Procktor himself standing in profile, cigarette in upraised hand, at home in The Room, Manchester Street (1967). The degree of evocative realistic clarity is astonishing in Procktor's 1991 oil portrait of an introspective-looking young man, Richard Selby (a painter himself and Redfern Gallery director).

Procktor 's imagination was kindled by his long painting trips abroad. He wrote, 'The light in Egypt is violet, in China daffodil, in Venice opalescent.'[5] The violet Egyptian light can be seen to permeate his exquisitely layered water/land/skyscape painting of The Nile Near Efdu (1985), in which metallic paint is used to conjure up the sizzling heat haze of the mountains reflected in the waters, whose colours run to deeper, lilac-infused tones than those of the sky they mirror.

The aquatints that Procktor made following a trip to China in 1980 are masterpieces of dispassionate intimacy: in his distilled view of Peking's Forbidden City (1980), architectural shapes and colours appear both theatrically monumental and elegantly sparse and pristine in composition. A similar kind of spatial and colourist economy, as well as an (understated) compassion for anyone immersed in such an apparently clinical environment, is also evident in Procktor's remarkable large-scale oil painting Inside Old Holloway (1974). It depicts the wire-enmeshed spiral staircase descending to the immaculately polished, glistening blood-pink floor below. Two indistinct yet somehow dignified-appearing female inmates stand on the two bisecting two prison landings. Far above, a muted expanse of blue is glimpsed through a hexagonal skylight, where grey metal bars, curiously branch-like in form, seem to reach beyond the confines of the prison. Perhaps they offer a transcendental allusion to the nature of freedom existing beyond the prison confines. The artist discerns a poignant, immanent beauty even in such a stark setting.

Notes

1 Craxton, J., in Massey, I. (2010), Patrick Procktor: Art and Life, Norwich: Unicorn Press, p. 127.
2 Mullins, E., 'Rise of a Reputation', in The Sunday Telegraph (26th May 1963).
3 Robertson. B., 'Patrick Procktor Paintings 1959-1989', in Oriel 31, (1989).
4 Procktor, P. (1991), Self-Portrait, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, p. 40.
5 Procktor, P., in Patrick Procktor: Art and Life, Op. Cit., p. 153.

Image © David Gwinnutt

Image © Jamie Collier

Jill Townsley

Sisyphus
26 January - 13 April 2013
Reviewed by Jonathan Harris

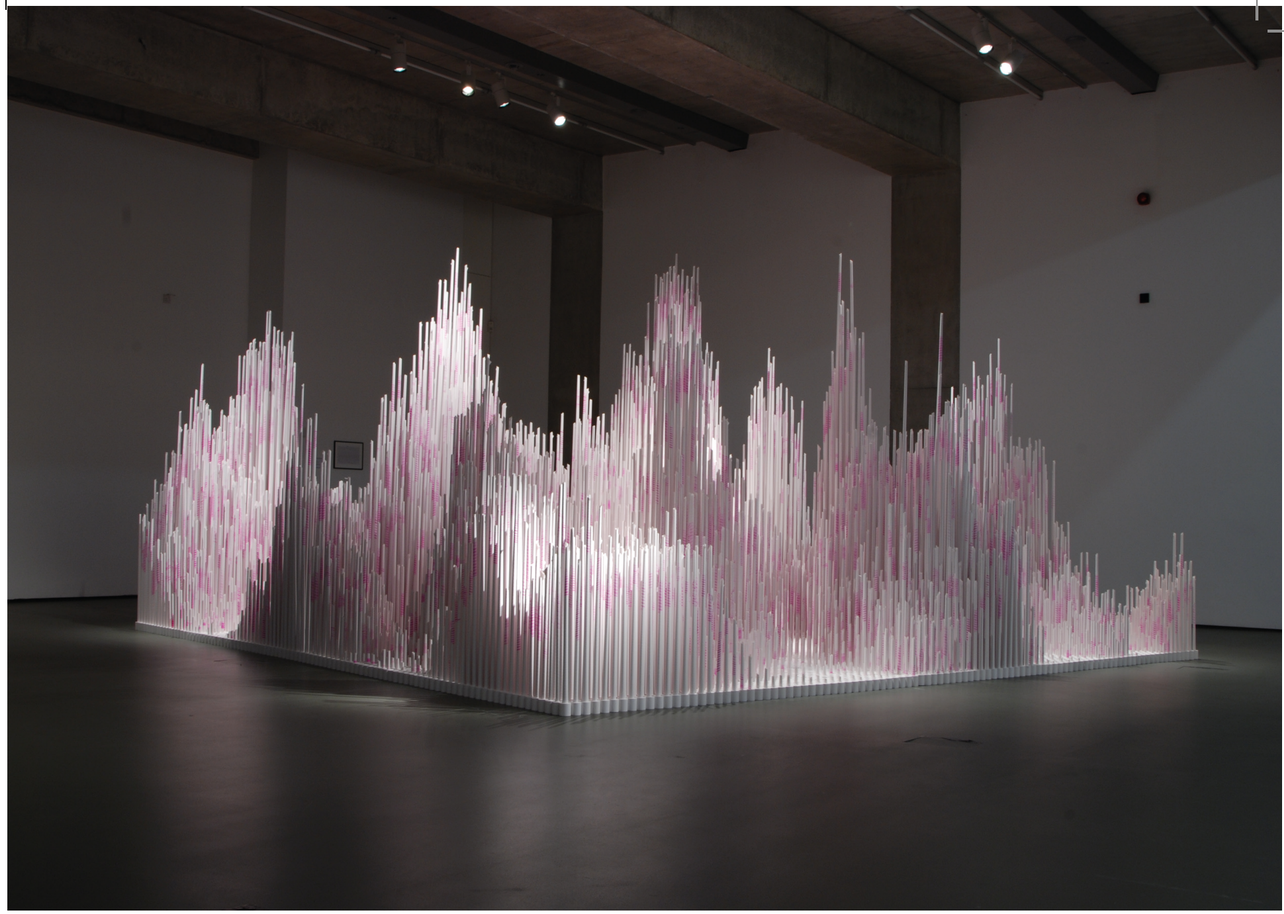


Image © Jill Townsley

The 'systemic sublime:' autonomy and reference in Jill Townsley's Sisyphus.

'I set up a system, and the system can catch part of what is happening – what's going on in the world – an appearance in the world, and suspend that appearance itself at any given instance from being important […] The work is about the system.'
- Douglas Heubler (2001)

Artists in the later 1960s and 1970s who attracted the label 'conceptualist' created works that, for varying reasons, seemed to seek to erase their own physicality. This was both a matter of these works' 'objecthood' (to use critic Michael Fried's term, coined at the time) and their visuality – that is, the matter of their being visible.[1] But only in quite limited cases – two examples being Douglas Heubler and Joseph Kosuth – did 'conceptualists' attempt actively and systematically, to eradicate these dual characteristics altogether from the works they produced. Heubler, for instance, produced 'works' consisting of only a few lines of text, setting out an instruction or plan for an artwork. But this text, typed onto a bit of paper, was not the 'work' either. The 'work' was the instruction or plan, which was, in essence, physically and visually intangible. Kosuth took this idea a stage further and produced whole essays as 'works,' and in so doing attempted to erase the difference between an 'artwork' and a 'work' of philosophical reasoning.[2] The legacy of these experiments for all artists since the 1970s has been the creation of a repeated and ineluctable oscillation – both somehow in the artwork and in readings of the artwork – between focus on its physicality/visuality and its conceptual meaning/implication. Jill Townsley's works in her exhibition Sisyphus at Huddersfield Art Gallery exemplify this oscillation, or tension, and explore its diverse effects.[3]

Townsley's Till Rolls (2011), for example, consists of 10,000 cash till rolls partly and differentially unrolled towards the sky, secured in a rectangle of space nearly six metres square. At a distance of a few metres the work begins to become astonishingly beautiful simply to look at – its visuality trumps its physicality, as it were. One searches for analogies to describe the form created. It suggests multiply ordered shards of ice, or of crystals, or – moving into more subjective metaphoric territory – a mega-city of futuristic skyscrapers. Photographs only enhance this reading. On close visual inspection the banal individual physical character of each till roll becomes evident and the metaphoric readings collapse. With this recognition the oscillation occurs and we swing towards the question of meaning and purpose. The work's visual physicality recedes (as does its capacity easily to accommodate metaphor) and the intangibles of implicated 'process' and 'procedure' begin to take hold.

There is, however, a productive generative and degenerative dialectic between the two poles of this oscillation – and this is most dramatically evident in Townsley's 2008 work Spoons. Here, both 'live' in the gallery and recorded on video, we get 'to see' (and 'to know') the invisible, ineluctable process of (re) production / (de) construction. The edifice of 9273 plastic spoons held together by 3091 rubber bands gradually collapses, as the physical tension within the individual elements (three spoons held together by one band) eventually relaxes and the structure eradicates itself. The edifice had been a pyramid when 'complete' – for western intellectuals, one of the most enigmatic of humanly-produced structures, with complexly combined architectural and symbolic meanings.[4] But the work's 'completion' lies, ultimately, of course, in its planned self-destruction. Townsley, playing God, is fascinated by the task of establishing conditions enabling a physical process and then setting the process into action – but the process, once active, is fully 'autochthonous,' meaning that it is self-fulfilled or self-controlled.

The overall effect of Townsley's works in Sisyphus is to point toward the enigma (or what the Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci called the 'antinomy') of an artwork's referential capacity set against its intrinsic formal autonomy. That is to say, the works may always be said to refer to things in the world and yet always also remain self-sufficient unto themselves. The enigma is, of course, in one sense, simply the quotidian 'not knowing' of how to bring into commensurateness these two poles of the oscillation. An antinomy is a 'mutual incompatibility,' and Immanuel Kant believed four such antinomies were central to the character of existence. Two of these are particularly relevant here: firstly, the disjunction between space and time and, secondly, the fact of human free will in an existence governed, he thought, by universal causality.

Townsley's Satie 840 dramatizes these two antinomies. In this installation we see a video, lasting over twenty hours, where the artist writes and then erases all the numbers between one and 840 with chalk on a blackboard. Based on a music score produced by Erik Satie though never performed in his lifetime, Satie 840 most evidentially brings Townsley herself into the 'work.' Perhaps the antinomy, or enigma, has a rhetorical resolution of sorts with this work – the oscillation between reference and autonomy is transcended (or 'superseded' to use a category in dialectics) in the figure of agency that Townsley herself here assumes. Structure is enabled, necessarily, by a process of structuring and structuring itself constructs structure (the central precept and insight of poststructuralist philosophy). But Gramsci's 'antinomies' were rooted in an analysis of twentieth century industrial capitalism and we should not miss the industrial-commercial materials that Townsley manipulates: plastic spoons and the paper upon which till receipts are printed. Murdered by Italian fascists in 1937, Gramsci's abiding concern was with the role of nationalist ideology and its power to motivate the working masses who should have been won over by communism.[5]

All the works in Sisyphus allude to this question of society seen as a system – its principles of ordering and re-ordering. As a totality, however, society's system is sublime: it cannot be visualized, only imagined or partially figured. Townsley, following in the footsteps of Heubler, continues an abstracted yet salient investigation into orders that are at once visual, artistic, social and intellectual. Her works point toward the system's totality, and towards the realities of its generative demise.

Notes

1 Heubler, D., in Alexander Alberro and Patricia Norvell (eds.) (2001), Recording Conceptual Art: Early Interviews with Barry, Heubler, Kaltenbach, LeWitt, Morris, Oppenheim, Siegelaub, Weiner by Patricia Norvell, University of California Press, p. 147.
2 See Harris, J. (2005), Writing Back to Modern Art: After Greenberg, Fried and Clark (Routledge), especially chapter 2: 'Pure formality: 1960s abstract painting.'
3 See, for example, Kosuth, J. (1991), Art After Philosophy and After , MIT Press.
4 The ancient myth of Sisyphus is that of the King of Corinth perpetually set to roll a boulder up a mountain only to have it roll down again.
5 See, for example, Podro, M. (1982), The Critical Historians of Art, Yale University Press.
6 See Forgacs, D. (ed.) (2012), Antonio Gramsci: Selections from Cultural Writings, Lawrence and Wishart.

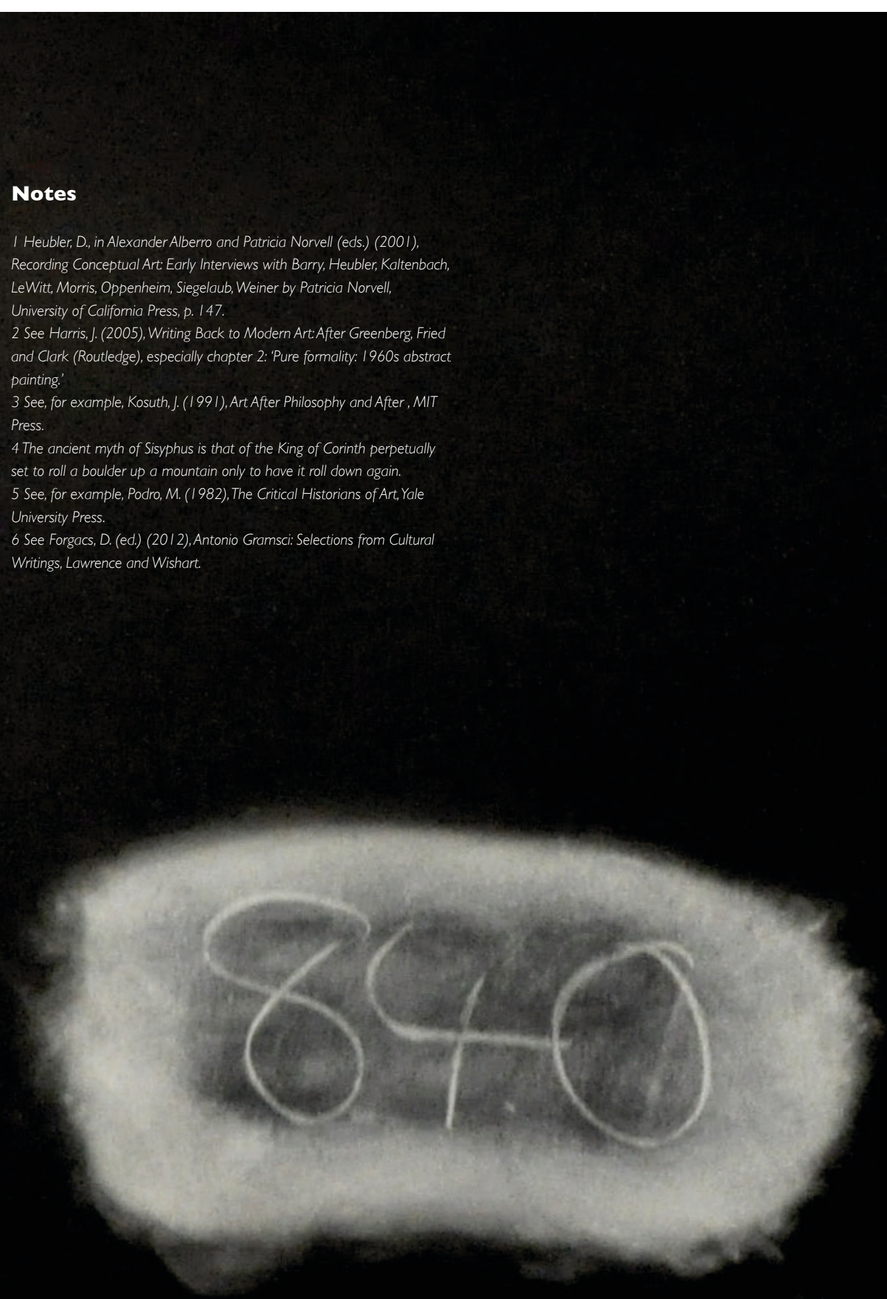


Image © Jill Townsley

Image © Jamie Collier

Gil Pasternak

Future Backgrounds
27 April - 6 July 2013
Reviewed by Griselda Pollock

You enter the white space of the gallery. A well-placed cluster of plain white plinths house sculptural objects under protective Perspex boxes. These small objects are in fact throw-way cameras in tutti-fruity colours—orange, bird's egg blue, lime green ... Rather remarkably, they have been smashed. Useless and disembowelled, these objects are fascinating. Their crushing has exposed their mechanical innards reminding us that behind the whole tradition of photography-made-easy lies a history of miniaturisation, mechanics, and optics. I found myself peering into the boxed-in camera to discover what mechanisms for the flash and so forth looked like. There was also the revelation of the film. These pre-digital cameras have rolls of film within them and as the light broke in when they were battered and exposed to light, the celluloid has been chemically altered: there will forever be a raw image, held in the fractured camera, the invisible moment of its destruction. But that is the wrong word: the cameras are not destroyed. They remain. As broken cameras they still speak, even more eloquently, with their insides made visible, of the machinery necessary to the making of indexical images, images that once held a momentary and luminous relation to a real world before them.

Making the 'dead' cameras, the sculptural objects that solicit our art gallery gaze they tell us something about the tenor of this exhibition by Gil Pasternak titled Future Backgrounds. It is not a show of photography; it is an installation about photography, which, therefore, opens on its uses, its rhetorics, its support for fantasies and ideologies. The gallery is not space of display, but of investigation. The relations between its several elements and two key spaces ask the viewer to become a thinking participant rather than a dispassionate tourist. Yet the space of the gallery is knowingly 'worked' because the anticipation of being shown something—the expectation of the gallery goer—has to be invoked in order to be re-routed into reflecting on processes, politics, places and issues that cannot be 'shown' yet are everywhere part of our visual culture. Hence the least and most unprecious of cameras are offered up as the exhibited 'object' in a wry parody of the white-cube gallery exhibition of modernist sculpture.

Aligned in three groupings in the main gallery space are other sculptural forms. These are uniformly black metal structures that stand firmly on the floor. They are, however, supports typically used in photographic studios for the hanging of backdrop paper against which the photographer's subjects are usually posed. Backdrops are fake, or rather they are imagined or fabricated scenarios into which a figure will be inserted while in fact standing in the photographer's studio. The backdrop is about the artifice with which the apparent 'real' of photography is staged. Making it the subject of the exhibition tells us that we need to pay attention to the backdrops of real situations, to the landscapes in which we live our lives, the human geographies we populate and make.

Closer inspection down the formal queue of hanging backdrops, waiting their turn in the light, show us that these are also carefully constructed images in which there is already a subject. These backdrops are already portraits, as it were. Their subjects are plants. Not any old plants, these plants represent for the Northern European setting of this show; the exotic, the hot, the dry, the South, and the Middle East, over there, elsewhere.

The first backdrop in the main grouping shows a vast prickly pear, a cactus whose leaves are prickling with sharp protective needles while also sprouting their distinctive fruits. The Hebrew name for this plant is Sabra. It is the term adopted by the emerging Israeli state for those born within its territory. Home-born, native, indigenous. Politics explodes with all the sharpness of the prickly pear's needles. The land where the prickly pear now grows has been not just the backdrop but is the inhabited geography of many peoples and cultures over its millennia. By the early twentieth century nationalism swept up formerly dispersed or imperialised subjects into a longing for a national identity. This could only exist when bonded to a national territory. Former co-inhabitants and new settlers, unwanted in other lands of a deadly Europe, collided to form one of the most tragic and intractable legacies of modernity and its colonialism, imperialism and nationalism. For the Palestinian people claiming their own indigeneity to these lands, Sabra is synonymous with Zionist and Zionist with colonist. For the Zionist, Sabra is the vision of the New Man and the New Woman in the age of return from millennia of exile and degradation in Europe and the Mediterranean worlds. Like these dogged, well-armed and fruitful plants, the new Israelis want to be identified with being rooted in the soil and being well prepared in self-defence. Ironically, the prickly pear is not an indigenous plant to the eastern Mediterranean. It was transplanted in the sixteenth century from Latin America under another moment of violent colonisation. Their importation echoes settler colonialism. Yet having come many centuries ago, these plants have also functioned in Palestinian agriculture as boundary markers for their groves and villages. Thus the plant that is 'portrayed' begins to unfold its many stories, its conflicting histories, and its competing uses: the deep difficulty of this place now.

The Victorians created a cultural language of flowers linking each flower to a specific, often sentimental, meaning. Pasternak has transposed this sentimental legacy to a zone of conflict and contestation, undoing the nationalist ideologies that seek to root themselves in soil by calling our attention to these plants that have come to connote exotic places without belonging to the place. His photographs also make visible yet the irrigation tubes which these plants need as a life-support system to survive in this transplanted life in the Eastern Mediterranean.

If I have raised the spectre of the Victorians and even more remotely colonial travel, Pasternak has already enfolded it into his installation. The entry to the large gallery space in which the dead cameras and the exotic backdrops meet, is through a darkened ante-room in which there is a carpet, and a plaster Classical plinth—the stock in trade of the nineteenth century photographic studio for the carte-de-visite mock-ups of the grand style of portraiture. But on the plinth is a Kodak carousel projector, endlessly moving its stately circle with a microphone directed at its machinery to amplify the regular click as the machine moves on, slide by slide. For an art historian, the carousel and the slide were until so recently our primary tools, making the translation of physical photographs and objects into transparencies, illuminated by intense light in necessarily darkened rooms. Physical and material things, photographs or photographed things (paintings, places, objects, sculptures, etc.) were cast as immaterial shadows on the wall. Their ephemerality and spectral power to bring the distant and unseen close begins a dialogue with the second gallery's refusal of images and insistence on our attention being given to the machines and technologies of photography itself. This opening encounter with an archaic technology of projection from the recent but almost forgotten past underlines the intention to ask us to think about the invisible and often very noisy mechanisms that make the spectacle of the image possible.

The slides that circulate on the carousel were discovered at Kirklees Image Archive. They are photographs made by a Victorian traveller and plant collector, Captain H.W. Brook, who photographed exotic plants in situ or in the home spaces to which he transported them. Pasternak found Brook's portfolio as part of his visual research for the exhibition and it is one of the sites that he is exploring in his current academic, ethno-botanical-oriented research work into the political lives of plants in photography and its histories. There is a shared grammar at work. The Victorian photographer does not present his plants as specimens in the manner of a botanist. Rather, using plinth, table and carpet as props, Brook produces portraits of these exotic florae.

It is at this point that the final element of the exhibition comes back into view. On the wall of the main gallery, are digital drawings of a standing figure that adopts the pose of one person in a now invisible family photograph. If the backdrop reminds us of the formally posed, officially created, ideological aspect of photography, the point and shoot throwaway camera apparently registers the informal, the spontaneous and the everyday making of images. Yet since writers such as Julia Hirsch (1980) and artists such as Jo Spence (1979) first drew attention to the 'content, meaning and effect' of 'family photographs' or the family album, the complexity of the family photograph has been analyzed from many points of view. What do these images disclose about the lived politics of everyday relations of class, race, gender, and sexuality? How has the ubiquity of an image of the family shaped what the family is and how it is experienced? How does the body unconsciously perform before the camera the gestures that signal the cultural fictions of masculinity and femininity, of ethnicity and otherness, of parent and child, of nationalism and (un)belonging?

Pasternak researches the point of intersection between two sites of photographic practice that are deeply embedded in the cultural formation of subjects and of nations: the family photograph and landscape. Pasternak has long been engaged in making sense of a relation between the informal and sentimental aspect of the family photograph, and an official or national history marked monumentally into the landscape. In several publications he has looked into a wide range of intersections between family photography, state ideology

Image © Jamie Collier

and the political domain at large, most often in the context of the Israel-Palestinian struggle, linking this specific site to the historical and theoretical discourses about family photography and family photographs. Landscape's role in the production of ideologies of power, domination and possession has been well-documented as indeed has the family photograph as register and influence on our very sense of the most intimate of social units. Pasternak, however, brings the focus onto their intersection in order to create a new kind of dialogue between background and foreground, people and setting. Land is something other than a borrowed or occupied backdrop; living and shaping itself in performances before imagined cameras, and writing over a landscape that has other meanings for families whose installation as the subjects of their own history do not yet have a known political grammar or a recognised photographic image. This may be why the digital drawings have no background, just the outline of a re-posed figure assuming a posture extracted and rendered strange from a photograph. Thus the conversations criss-cross within the photo-mechanically populated landscape of the exhibition.

Can artists as researchers use the exhibition space as a laboratory for research? Can the site of the presentation of suggestive findings - when the knowledge that is being produced is at once being excavated from conventions of representation and mundane realities so commonplace as to become invisible backdrops - be rewoven across the varied points of anchorage that this installation constructs through fragile lines of communication and connection? The answer from this installation is yes. I am asked to read the elements of a perfectly constituted exhibition whose purpose is not to show but to incite me to work, to bring forth the provocations to thinking that are generated in the movement between the assembled elements, at once discrete and awaiting their chance to play a part in a larger statement.

One of the major areas of Pasternak's research lies in provoking critical discourses and cultural practices around the slash that divides Israel/Palestine. The slash has become a wall with people positioned on either side. A future for the dignity, safety and justice of two peoples depends on imaginative leaps beyond walls and frontiers that may involve images of layering and co-habitation. Pasternak's work takes no position, and invokes no specific politics. It simply addresses the specific issues that arise from two major genres of photography: landscape and the family album, where the family in that landscape is set against a backdrop that can never really be a landscape. It has history, it is human rather than physical geography and the question is: what might be a future backdrop for communal life and future generations? What is the future for families and communities, of all sorts, in this human space and geopolitical space? By making invisible the central players and allowing the ground of human and social life to stand in line, as so many fabricated backdrops await a new configuration of people in the space, Pasternak's work points to the role of artistic formulations of issues that are stymied with the dead weight of fixed ideologies and known political stalemates.

Pasternak's Future Backgrounds functions as a comparable form of aesthetic research using photographic thinking as its instrument to probe the 'problem,' to name the problem, as one of space, ground and the figure and the real and fabricated relations of the two in both time and space and in fantasies sustained by images made on site and in the studio against borrowed backdrops. This show is not an exhibition of photography. It demonstrates a way to think through a set of relating issues with photography. It belongs in the field Edward Said outlined in his essay, 'Invention, Memory and Place' (2000). There Said identifies the overlap of memory and geography that produces what he calls 'human space.' Memory is at once personal and familial, and historical and often national(ist). If memory appears to be inert, arising simply because the past has happened, we are now all too aware of a politics of memory, the invention of tradition itself. Where geography enters, we also encounter histories of domination, and invasion, transformation and occupation. But as Said points out there are also imaginative geographies, imposed maps and mental fantasies of place and space. The Middle East is an extreme, agonised and significant theatre for the playing out of contested memories, effaced presences, new inscriptions on the land and erased traces. As Said suggests:

'[behind the] media accounts […] of the conflict […we can] discern a much more interesting and subtle conflict. Only by understanding the special mix of geography generally and landscape in particular with historical memory and, as I said, an arresting form of inventions can begin to grasp the persistence of conflict and the difficulty of resolving it, a difficulty that is far too complex and grand that the current peace process could possibly envisage, let alone resolve.'

The point is that we need creative thinking that comes through art but does not rest simply as art. Artistic practice as research takes us through the specificities of a singular practice as a means of thinking the world. By means of the jumps that can be made through combination, juxtaposition and transition, the creation of images and the montage of elements, new connections are forged. Here the undoing of the camera, the severing of the figure from the backdrop, and the elevation of backdrop to subject, recombines as an installation that foregrounds what his academic research seeks to pierce through visual analysis.

The show's location in Huddersfield, the use of a photographic archive of a British colonial traveller, and the transplantation of botanical specimens reminds us of a deep British involvement in the land and peoples of the adopted prickly pear through the colonial Mandate (1918-1948). It acknowledges the need to de-exoticise, to move outside the garden and irrigated parks of fostered plants and see more clearly the lives and their living spaces, free from the distracting rhetoric of imaginative invention of national tradition and its concurrent obliteration of its companion people's sense of lived histories in Palestine/Israel. So, we have to imagine future backgrounds that might encompass all the histories, memories and dreams of this complex human space that Gil Pasternak's subtle work invokes through such a telling image as the prickly pear.

Notes

1 See Almog, O. (2000), The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew, trans. Haim Watzman, London, Los Angeles and Berkeley: University of California Press.
2 Pasternak, G. (2013), 'The Brownies in Palestina: Politicizing Geographies in Family Photographs', Photography and Culture 6:1, p. 41-64.
3 Pasternak, G., 'Playing Soldiers: Posing Militarism in the Domestic Sphere', in Paul Fox and Gil Pasternak, (eds.) (2011), Visual Conflicts: On the Formation of Political Memory in the History of Art and Visual Cultures, Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, pp. 139–168; Pasternak, G. (2010), 'Posthumous interruptions: the political life of family photographs in Israeli military cemeteries', Photography and Culture 3:1, pp. 41–64; Pasternak, G. (2009), 'Covering horror: family photographs in Israeli reportage on terrorism', Object: Graduate Research and Reviews in the History of Art and Visual Culture 11, pp. 87–104.
4 Said, E. (2000), 'Invention, Memory and Place', Critical Inquiry, 26, pp. 175-192.
5 Ibid. p. 183.

Image © David Swann

David Swann

Mobilising Healthcare
20 July - 28 September 2013
Reviewed by Jeremy Myserson

Think about design for healthcare and the spotlight inevitably falls on the systems, spaces and services of the hospital environment. Hospitals are where the real action is be found in patient care – and where design innovation can make the biggest difference in terms of patient safety, whether this is related to controlling infection or avoiding medical error.

Against this background, it is all too easy to forget that more than a billion people around the globe now receive care in non-hospital settings according to the World Health Organisation; in UK alone, around 2.6,000,000 people receive care from district nurses each year. Indeed the design story in healthcare extends far beyond the confines of the hospital, even if it commands less attention outside its walls.

It is to David Swann's credit that his pioneering exhibition, Mobilising Healthcare, part of the ROTOЯ programme at Huddersfield Art Gallery, makes a comprehensive and engaging job of redressing the balance in design for healthcare by showing how innovation also flourishes in homes and communities away from the large nursing wards, operating theatres and intensive treatment units of the modern hospital.

Swann, who leads Product Design and Interior Design at the University of Huddersfield, shines a light on some relatively neglected corners of our healthcare system – from the home visit by the district nurse to the emergency ambulance on our streets – and demonstrates how design can make a difference there too. His primary tactic is to set contemporary innovations in the field, including some he has designed himself, within a strong historical context projected mainly via large-scale black-and-white photographs.

These evocative images depict one 150 years of healthcare in the community and the home. Indeed, Mobilising Healthcare is effectively prefaced by Florence Nightingale's assertion in 1861 that:

'everyone will agree with me that every sick man (or woman) is better at home, if he (or she) could have the same medical treatment and nursing there that he (or she) would have in hospital.'[1]

Gleaming images from the Queen's Nursing Institute set the standard for the district nurses of the 1950s who were more smartly turned out than today's nursing practitioners, but as Swann wryly points out, were carrying far less equipment. Historic instruments and artefacts such as Gladstone bags, syringes, weighting scales and sterilising kits recall the improvisatory medical expertise of pre-World War Two and pre-NHS Britain. But these exhibits, borrowed from several museum collections, do little more than form an atmospheric backdrop to the contemporary projects, which form the main cornerstones of the exhibition and tell us something new and fresh about healthcare away from the hospital in the twenty-first century.

Pride of place among these new projects is Swann's own award-winning redesign of the traditional black nursing bag carried by community nurses on home visits – a case which has been largely unchanged for the past 100 years. Swan's total rethink, which formed the heart of his PhD research at the Royal College of Art, creates a portable product fit for twenty-first century purpose in terms of modularity and materials.

The new design aims to enhance patient safety by making sure that hands are decontaminated and generally improving the productivity of the health visitor. It also looks the part, clinical and efficient; indeed a key aspect of Swann's thesis on healthcare is about projecting a professional image to build patient confidence outside the hospital.

The nursing bag innovation came about as part of a larger EPSRC-funded study at the RCA on designing the future of the ambulance. This research, and a futuristic prototype interior that emerged from a subsequent collaboration between the RCA, the London Ambulance Service, Imperial College Healthcare Trust and other partners, also features in Mobilising Healthcare.

Developed by bringing together frontline paramedics, clinicians, patients, academic researchers, engineers and designers in a co-design process, the prototype interior project began with the designers joining ambulance crews on callouts during twelve hour shifts. Key insights were translated into sketch designs; a full-scale test rig was mocked up in cardboard and foam, resulting in a full-size 'looks like, feels like' mobile demonstrator.

The new ambulance reconfigures the layout of the patient treatment space. There is 360° access to the patient, which not only improves clinical efficiency but also enhances patient safety. The interior is designed to be easier to clean. Equipment packs containing specific treatment consumables aid clinical performance, infection control and stock control. A new digital diagnostics and communications system anticipates a time when electronic patient records can be called up inside any ambulance racing to the scene of an emergency.
The new ambulance project is in some ways the 'poster boy' for Swann's design vision for enhanced care outside the hospital.

Its ergonomic and digital innovation points to a future in which ambulances do not simply scoop up patients and ferry them back to primary care hospitals, but treat them on the spot or at walk-in clinics in the community, thus easing pressure on the system.

Politically, as UK governments try to rationalise care into fewer specialist super-hospitals and close some local hospitals, such design debates are right on the money. Recent Department of Health/Design Council demonstration projects to kick-start innovation in the NHS are also given an airing in this exhibition, such as the Design Bugs Out initiative, which aimed to sit alongside a 'deep clean' of infection-riddled UK hospitals.

Design Bugs Out is represented in Mobilising Healthcare by Pearson Lloyd's smart, simple and robust commode, which is made by NHS supplier Bristol Maid. The alliance of a leading British design firm with a prominent British manufacturer under the auspices of a publicly funded initiative to improve UK health services, deserves commendation. But other parts of the world, where people have far less access to hospital care, perhaps provide the most inspiring examples of what design thinking can achieve.

My favourite case study in Swann's compendium is the ColaLife pilot in Zambia, which takes spaces in refrigerated Coca Cola crates to transport pods containing essential drugs around the country. This is community-based healthcare innovation at its most basic and ingenious. Indeed, faced with the accelerating demands of an ageing and obese population, there is now growing interest in the NHS in such frugal techniques and in 'reverse innovation' of low-cost, high-impact ideas back into our increasingly expensive healthcare system.

Swann's own ABC Lifesaver syringe, a brilliant innovation designed to deter non-sterile syringe re-use in the developing world by turning bright red sixty seconds after use, points the way to better, more sustainable community healthcare. It addresses the estimated 1.3, 000, 000 early deaths caused by unsafe needle injections worldwide through the clever combination of a nitrogen-filed pack and a special ink that colours the barrel of the syringe when exposed to air.

By curating a show of his own and other design innovations of this kind, David Swann brings a novel and important angle to the critical debate about the future of healthcare in the UK and around the world. We may want to provide more care outside the expensive hospital setting. However we need to design the right systems and services with the highest standards of patient safety to make it work. Recapturing the calm, immaculate reassurance of the Queen's Nursing Institute isn't going to be easy.

Notes

1 Nightingale, F. (1861), published letter to the chair of the Liverpool Training School for Nurses, in Florence Nightingale and the Birth of Professional Nursing, Vol. 4 (1999), ed. by Williamson, L., Thoemmes Press, pp. 25-26.

Image © David Swann

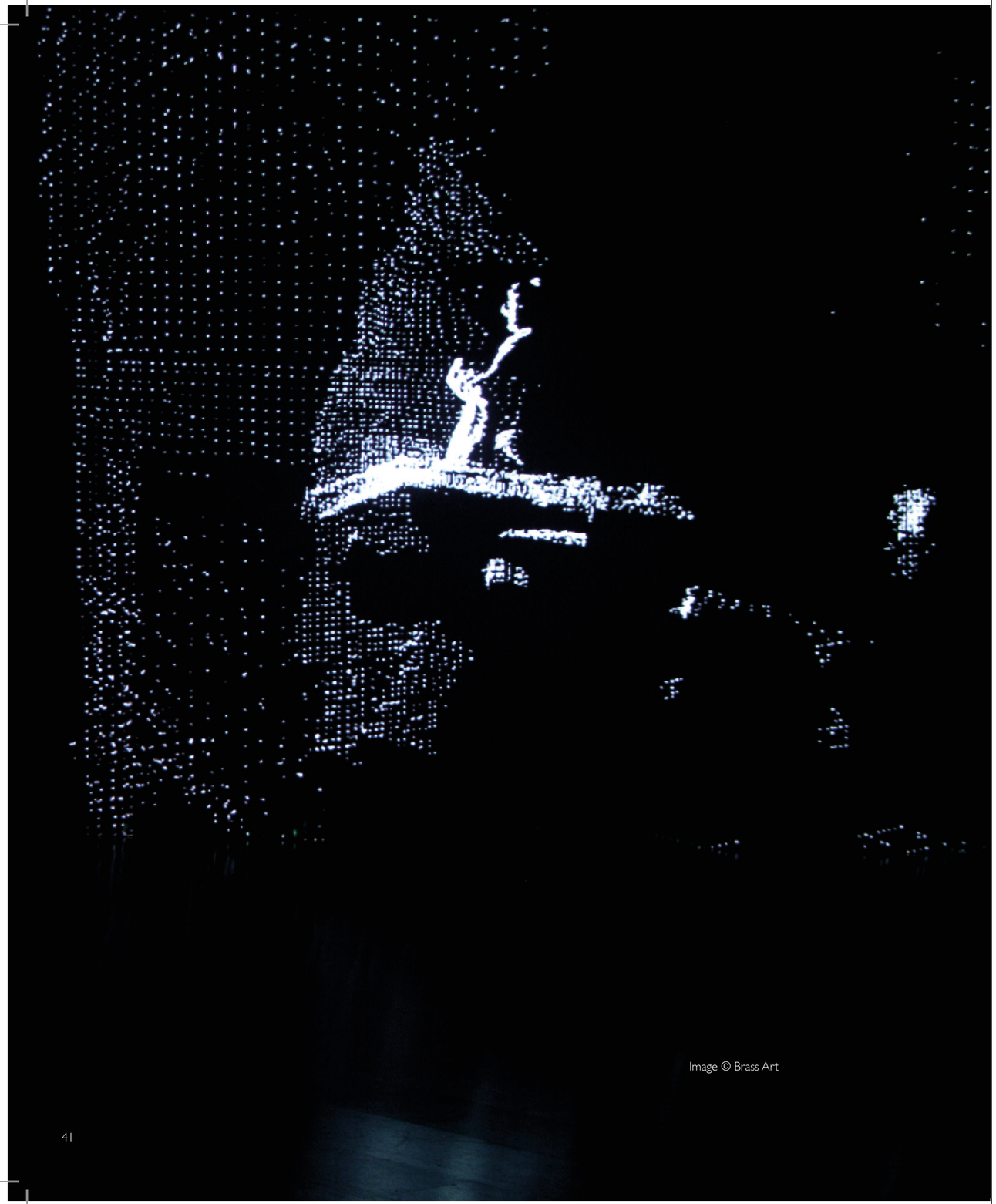


Image © Brass Art

Brass Art

The Imagining of Things
October 2013 – January 2014
Reviewed by Susannah Thompson

For the architectural theorist Anthony Vidler 'the house [has] provided an especially favored site for 'uncanny' disturbances: its apparent domesticity, its residue of family history and nostalgia, its role as the last and most intimate shelter of private comfort sharpened by the terror of invasion by alien spirits'.[1] In The Imagining of Things, Chara Lewis, Anneké Pettican and Kristin Mojsiewicz, the three artists working collectively as Brass Art act as those 'alien spirits', invading the once private, now very public interiors of the Parsonage, a large, stone-built Georgian house standing on the very edge of Yorkshire moorland, once home to the Brontë sisters.

Inhabiting the creative spaces of the house on nocturnal visits, the improvised performances and resulting shadow-play which form the basis of video and photographic works in The Imagining of Things echo the scampering and game-playing of the Brontë children as they acted out the imaginary worlds of Angria and Gondal. The tiny books, maps and drawings of these fictional lands – the juvenilia of Charlotte, Emily, Anne and Branwell - allowed the children to invent and project narratives they could write and perform. In turn, Brass Art have used the domestic spaces of the Parsonage itself as an entry point for their own creative processes, employing the site as an expanded theatrical tableau, part transgressive homage, part performative return to the recurrent themes of their practice: doubling, mutability, liminality, the uncanny, thresholds and the spectral nature of technology in the manifestation of these themes.

The Imagining of Things is one element of a larger, ongoing research project, Shadow Worlds: Writer's Rooms. The multi- and inter-disciplinary methods and practices employed by the artists, together with their commitment to collaborative and collective ways of working combine in this work to reveal a biomythographic approach to topoanalysis. In the exhibition held at Huddersfield Art Gallery, rather than attempting a literal or illustrative re-telling or interpretation of the preoccupations of the Brontë's lives and works, the artists' approach to space and subject attempts to reflect or parallel the affinities which exist between themselves and the literary figures which inform their practice, fusing past and present. The 'concentric circles of narration'[2] woven throughout the novels of the Brontë sisters, Russian doll-like stories within stories and rooms within rooms, are formally reflected in the immersive mise-en-abyme of Brass Art's installation. Standing within the gallery, the effect of the flickering forms and morphing, shifting shadows projected and reflected across the walls and ceiling of the space are disorientating. Half-captured images sweep and flit before the viewer, swiftly emerging and fading. Spinning, oscillating figures revolve within and beyond their projected spaces, appearing disconcertingly in front of, above and behind the viewer simultaneously. Using costume and handmade masks and props, the artists, although seen only as ethereal, spectral forms, are already in disguise. It's as though Francesca Woodman had been cast in the film adaptation of a novel by Angela Carter. Glimpsed only fleetingly, these human-animal forms are avatars of the artists bodies as described through the technology of Microsoft Kinect, a motion sensor 3D scanner used in gaming.

Many of the invisible details, traces and fragments of the artists' improvised performances in the 'real', yet psychologically loaded spaces of the Brontë Parsonage (specifically, the Hallway, Dining Room and Mr Brontë's bedroom) were revealed only later – the shadows cast by the artists' bodies as they whirled around and about the artefacts and relics remained unseen by them during the performance itself. With photographer Simon Pantling and programmer Spencer Roberts, Brass Art recorded both the scene itself and a 'shadow realm', sounds and images beyond the threshold of 'the real', ghostly forms which appear only when the work has been completed. Although the pixellated forms within the video work are made visible through the use of cutting-edge technology, the images carry with them the remnants of distinctly older artworks, recalling the intricate, velvety cross-hatching seen in the drawings of Mervyn Peake or Honoré Daumier. The enigmatic, unheimlich figures and forms – both seen and suggested - are mirrored by a soundscape created by the composer Alistair MacDonald using field recordings and the artists' voices. As light and shadow flicker and fade, so too fragmented voices whisper, giggle, murmur and collide. Both image and sound combine to unsettle and distort any attempt at single-point perspective or 'fixing' on the part of the audience. Both real and virtual spaces, concrete, sonic and psychological are thus warped, playing out as an endless feedback loop in a hall of mirrors.

Like many of the architectural motifs in the novels of the Brontë sisters themselves, the artists evoke the sense of moving through spaces only half-illuminated, corridors echoing with voices half-heard. Candles, draughts, firelight, the sweep of skirts and curtains, laughter from the attic, corridors, windows - the spaces and bodies in these works are often scarred, haunted, burnt or broken yet they remain resolutely powerful. In both the novels and in Brass Art's work for this exhibition, gendered ideologies are questioned, thresholds are trampled, rooms stormed and images, spaces and bodies are in flux, permeable. Rosi Braidotti has written of the 'acute awareness of the non-fixity of boundaries' and 'the intense desire to go on trespassing, transgressing',[3] a statement which seems to encapsulate the critical intentions in Brass Art's practice. To return to (and appropriate) the words of Anthony Vidler, 'space [...] has been increasingly defined as a product of subjective projection and introjection as opposed to a stable container of objects and bodies'.[4] In The Imagining of Things Brass Art recurrently deploy 'the vocabularies of displacement and fracture, torquing and twisting, pressure and release, void and block, informe and hyperform [...] in work that seeks to reveal, if not critique, the conditions of a less than settled everyday life.'[5]

Notes

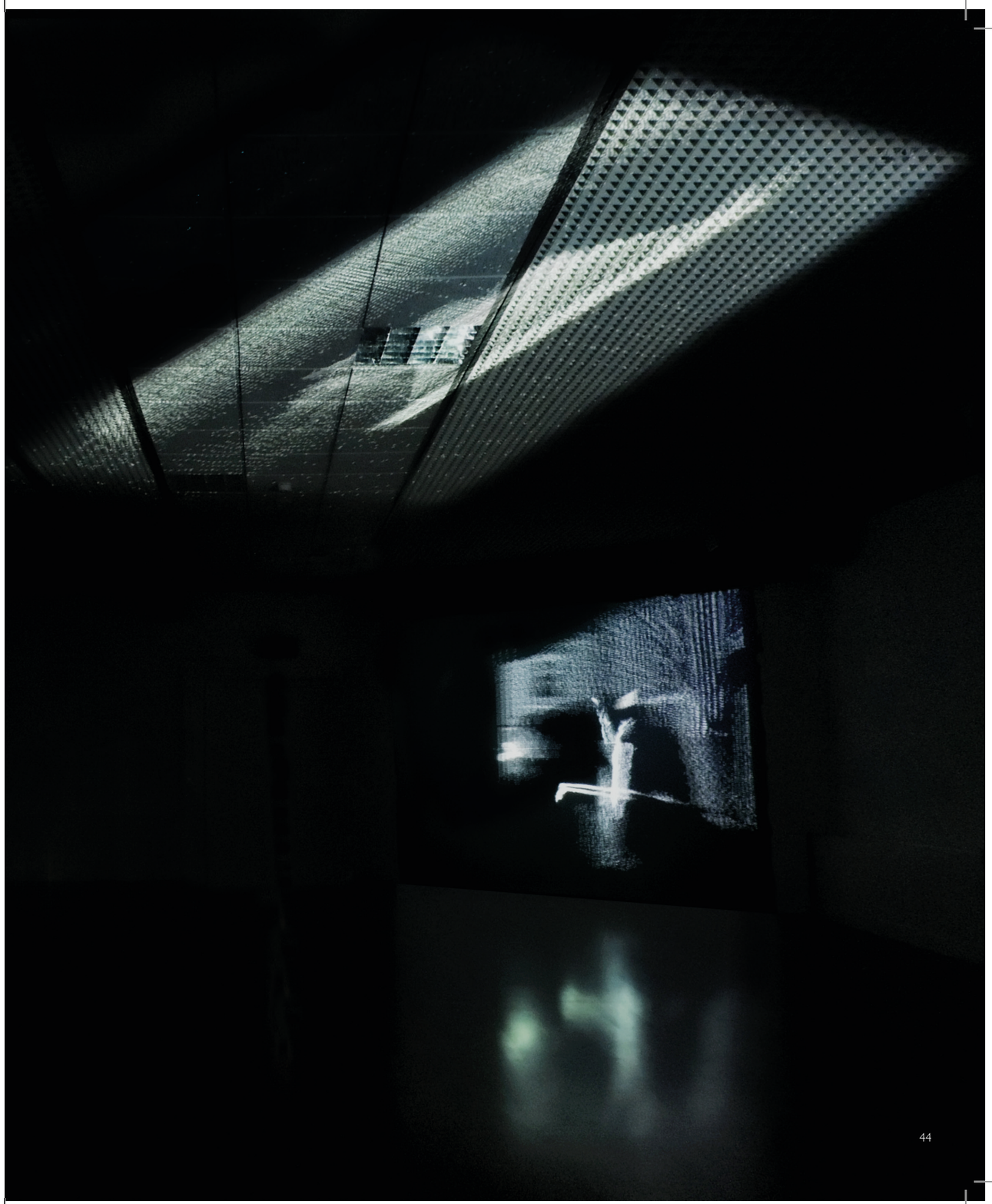
1 Vidler, A. (1987). 'The Architecture of the Uncanny: The Unhomely Houses of the Romantic Sublime', Assemblage, No.3, July. MIT Press, p. 7

2 Gilbert, S. M. & Gubar, S.(2000; 2nd ed). 'Looking Oppositely: Emily Brontë's Bible of Hell', Chapter 8 of The Madwoman in the Attic: The Woman Writer and the Nineteenth Century Literary Imagination, Yale University Press: New Haven and London, p. 249

3 Braidotti, R. (201 12nd ed).' Introduction: By Way of Nomadism', Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory, Columbia University Press, p. 36

4 Vidler, A. (2002). 'Introduction', Warped Space: Art, Architecture and Anxiety in Modern Culture, MIT Press.

5 Ibid.



Contributor Biographies

Peter Suchin is an artist and critic, contributing to Art Monthly, Frieze, The Guardian, Mute, and many other publications. His visual work is discussed in Paul Crowther's The Phenomenology of Modern Art, Continuum, 2012.

Brenda Polan FRSA was Director of Programmes (Media) at London College of Fashion in the University of the Arts London until 2012, and also works as a freelance journalist specialising in fashion, design and architecture, media issues and women's topics. She is the co-author of The Great Fashion Designers with Roger Tredre, Berg 2009.

Robert Clark is an arts writer (The Guardian), Reader in Fine Art at the University of Derby and, under the name Robert Casselton Clark, an artist. Recent solo shows have included: A Silence That Never Was, Gallery North, Newcastle, UK (2012), Elevage de Poussière, Oliva Arts Centre, S. João Da Madeira, Portugal (2012), The Who of the I, Site Specific Commission, Sheffield (2010), That Faraway Look, Lanchester Gallery, Coventry (2009).

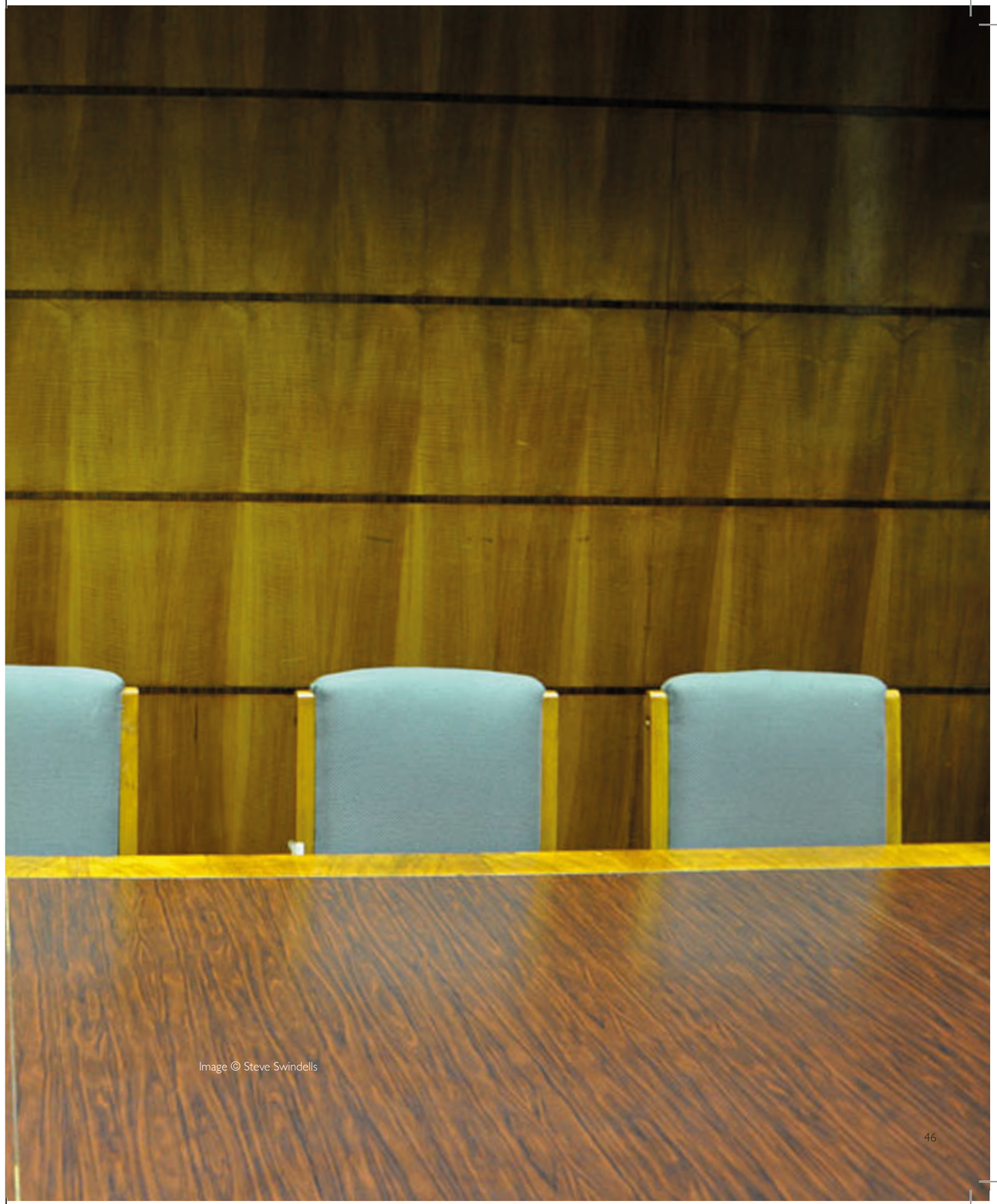
Philip Vann has written monographs on the artists Dora Holzhandler, Greg Tricker, Tessa Newcomb, William Crozier, Joash Woodrow and Keith Vaughan, and is author of Face to Face: British Self-Portraits in the Twentieth Century.

Jonathan Harris is Professor in Global Art & Design Studies and Director of Research at WSA. He is one of the inaugural professors in the Winchester Centre for Global Futures in Art Design and Media. He is author and editor of sixteen books and over a hundred journal essays. Recent publications include The Utopian Globalists: Artists of Worldwide Revolution, 1919-2009 (Wiley Blackwell in 2012). He is also editing a book on Pablo Picasso.

Griselda Pollock is Professor of Social and Critical Histories of Art and Director, Centre CATH (Cultural Analysis, Theory and History) at the University of Leeds. Her current interests focus on the image and time, on trauma and aesthetic inscriptions, and feminist interventions in psychoanalytical aesthetics as well as cultural memory and the Holocaust. She has just completed After-images/After-Effects: Trauma and Aesthetic Transformation in the Virtual Feminist Museum (2013).

Jeremy Myerson is a writer, academic and activist in design. He holds the Helen Hamlyn Chair of Design at the Royal College of Art, London, where he is Director of the College's Helen Hamlyn Centre for Design, addressing people-centred design to improve life.

Susannah Thompson is an art historian, writer and critic. She is Lecturer in Visual Culture at Edinburgh College of Art, University of Edinburgh. Her academic research focusses largely on artwriting and alternative modes of criticism, specifically writing by visual artists and the role of writing in contemporary art practice. She has contributed as a critic to magazines and journals including Art Review, Flash Art, Contemporary, Modern Painters, Circa, Variant, A-N and MAP and has written catalogue essays and gallery texts for a number of artists and organisations.



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