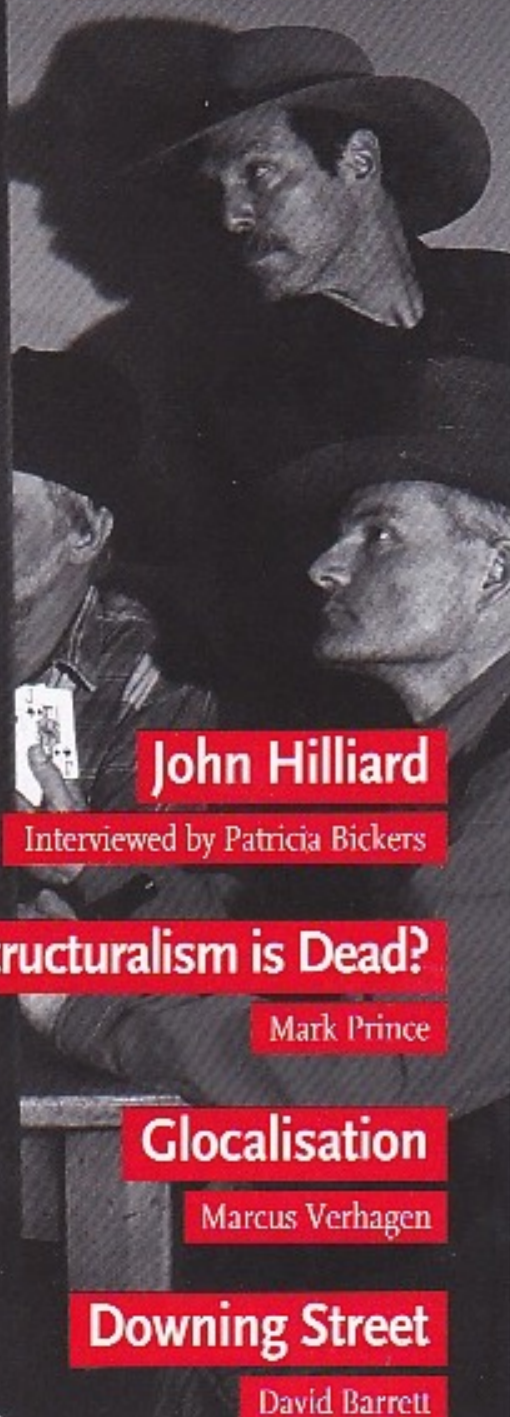


ART

MONTHLY

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John Hilliard

Interviewed by Patricia Bickers

Structuralism is Dead?

Mark Prince

Glocalisation

Marcus Verhagen

Downing Street

David Barrett

taken from our everyday environment. Through such focus, these overlooked objects become transformed into studies of the changes of surface structure, materiality and patterns of movement. By deploying mechanisms such as time-lapse, interlaced single-frame sequences and overlapping dissolves, he explores densities and interactions of light and shadow.

The central installation in the main gallery comprises five monitors that study Moiré patterns generated by everyday objects. These are often the undesired side effect of images generated by various digital-imaging and computer-graphics techniques, but Hamlyn deliberately explores their formation to create unique and imaginative patterns. Hamlyn's work has often explored the notion of see-through spaces. This is seen in his reflexive site-specific piece *Smoke*, 2015, a 20-second back-projected loop of a burning cigarette that is thoughtfully positioned next to the window facing the smoker's corner outside the building. Hamlyn has filmed it in extreme close-up, at a rate of four frames per second, in order to speed up the burning process to six times normal speed. At a fleeting glance it could easily be mistaken for burning film and is faintly reminiscent of Hollis Frampton's iconic 1971 film (*nostalgia*) where still images are burnt on a hotplate. Of course, the notion of nostalgia is unavoidable in this piece, which fetishistically showcases an extravagant loop hanging from the ceiling for a now obsolete 16mm film projector.

The first work we encounter in the gallery space is *Clapping*, 2006, a compelling one-minute video on a monitor which seems to ironically welcome the viewer into the show. This is a continuous shot of a pair of hands clapping which is cut into single frames, one per clap, reflexively echoing the filmic process. What could at times be seen as a rather intense interest in medium-specificity is often subverted through playful irreverence. For example, the artist recently restaged Anthony McCall's *List Describing a Cone* light-based film installation for his students, but instead of using a smoke machine Hamlyn simply invited the students to recreate the 1973 happening by smoking instead.

Zoetrope, 2008, is one of the key works in the show. In this three-minute film a yellow plastic clothes-peg bag creates a rotating Moiré pattern. The location where each work was filmed is meticulously detailed: *Zoetrope* was recorded in north-west Umbria, for example; *Berlin Moiré*, 2012, a 90-second piece, was filmed through the window of a furniture shop in Prenzlauerberg, Berlin; *Autogrill Vergherato*, a 2008, three-minute Moiré pattern, meanwhile, was produced in a service

station on the E45 (the Rome-Berlin axis road envisaged by Mussolini and Hitler) in Tuscany.

This refined show presents work projected on most available surfaces, including the inner black box of the gallery, against a hypnotic soundtrack of lapping waves. At the same time, we are never allowed to forget that each piece is rooted in time and space – perhaps one that is more usually overlooked but, nevertheless, is marked by its own specific geo-temporality. The tension between the lyrical and the cerebral in the work is again playfully dispelled with the final piece, *Now wash your hands*, 2006, a 20-minute medium-specific piece of jittering hands being washed and shown on an original TV monitor (otherwise it would not jitter, we are told).

The word zoetrope comes from the Greek words *zoe*, 'life', and *tropos*, 'turning'. Here, the show offers us an alternative mapping of the past decade in Hamlyn's life's work, although my enduring memory is of my young children clapping to the screen at the entrance: Bravo! ||

SOPHIA PHOCA is course leader of fine art, Canterbury UCA.

Newcastle and Gateshead Round-up

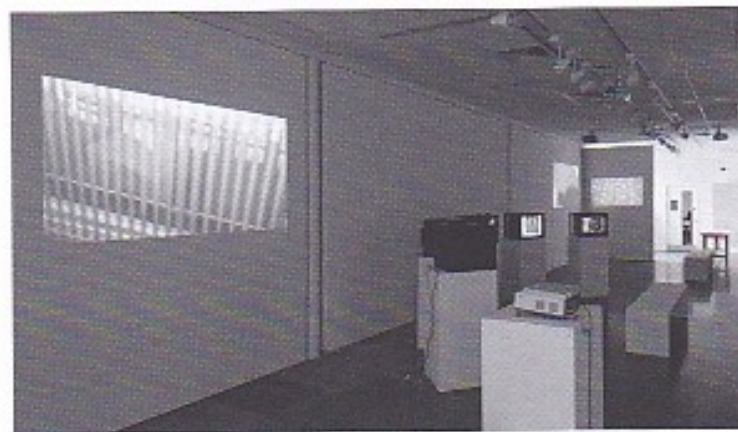
Drop City • NewBridge Project • Hatton Gallery • Workplace

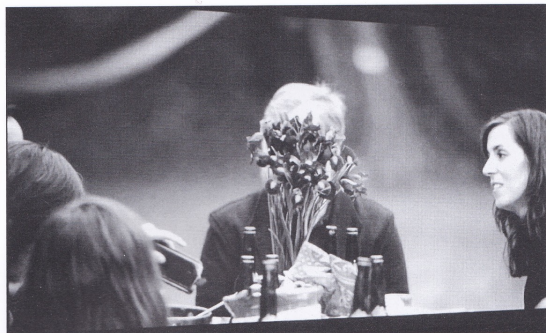
Newcastle has witnessed a growth in good artist-led and independent activity over the past few years with Circa Projects, NewBridge Project and Northern Charter, amongst others, exemplifying a new regional confidence. The small, appointment-only gallery Drop City, set up in 2014 by Paul Becker, Nadia Hebson, Sam Watson (who also co-founded Circa Projects) and Eleanor Wright, adds a distinctive voice to this mix. The gallery presents a solo exhibition by **Francesco Pedraglio** comprising a single-screen film *Los Barbarians* (The Barbarians), 2014. Shot in an upmarket villa on the outskirts of Mexico City while the artist was on a residency, it eavesdrops on a relaxed dinner party with the incongruous soundtrack providing a menacing undertone.

The film is loosely separated into two parts. In the first half we see the characters mostly depicted through reflections in mirrors and windows. Pedraglio films discreetly, framing each body awkwardly within the architecture, as the film's participants roam freely. The narration is low and often inaudible. As the film progresses, an ominous male voice-over begins to deliver portentous statements. As the non-choreographed action unfolds, phrases such as 'I'm over you like a filthy blanket' and 'you can smell me, can't you', actively undermine otherwise cordial scenes. The narration is seemingly written from the position of the architecture, and a nebulous character starts to dominate. Object, subject and spectator converge, as we're never quite sure who exactly is speaking and where the speech is directed. The untethered narration floats free of the image. Can an object speak? And, if so, on what terms?

The elements of the film – soundtrack, image and voice-over – only partially cohere. The use of a stark snare drum and dissonant instrumentation in the soundtrack enhances

Zoetrope installation view

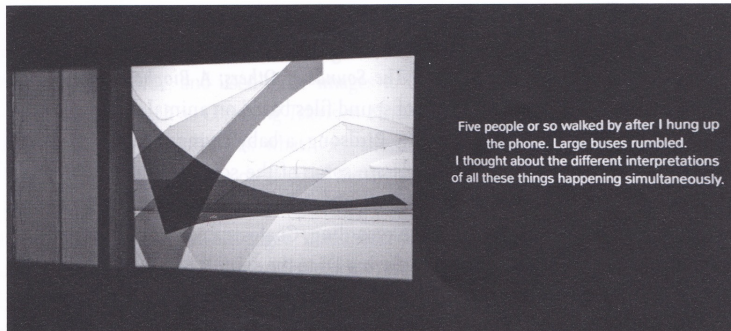




the general sense of dislocation. Pedraglio harnesses the sonic atonality found in horror movies to ramp up the prescribed tension. The persistently fluctuating depth of field heightens this effect, with figures coming in and out of focus. One could draw comparisons with John Smith's seminal *Girl Chewing Gum*, 1976, or even comedian Rob Brydon's 2004 TV programme *Director's Commentary*. In different ways, both of these comparators play off the disjuncture of found footage and the didactic voice-over. Similarly to Smith, Pedraglio's film narrativises the incidental, yet unlike his forerunner Pedraglio resists legibility – language is never used solely in the service of meaning. This separation between what the image shows us and what the sound is telling us creates a gap, holding both representative modes in partial suspension. This confluence of literary experimentation and storytelling is a common motif of Pedraglio's practice and in *Los Barbaros* the artist finds a new cinematic ambition.

The NewBridge Project presents *Nervous skies*, which is both the name of the show and the collaborative work made by artists Mat Fleming, Deborah Bower and Annette Knol with writer Amelia Bande. Taking the form of a synchronised four-screen projection, the work is presented in a single line across one wall of the gallery. This is the third time the group has worked together and the separate presentation of 16mm animation, text and hand-collaged slides illustrates their dialogic approach to making. While each artist has clearly worked on different aspects of the installation, nobody makes individual claims for their contributions. The installation infers a non-hierarchical relationship between the members of the group, and operates as a form of visual conversation. While it isn't quite clear how each artist has informed the others' contributions, the resultant installation offers clear formal analogies.

'We were two lines travelling parallel. It seemed suspicious to me.' The text, written by the group using automatic writing experiments and edited by Bande, provides a set of enigmatic and discontinuous anecdotes alongside a sequence of abstract animations. I'm reminded of Norton Juster's 1963 graphic novel *The Dot and The Line: a Romance in Lower Mathematics*, a publication that similarly produced animistic expression with



Five people or so walked by after I hung up the phone. Large buses rumbled. I thought about the different interpretations of all these things happening simultaneously.

simplified geometry. The direct intervention and application of collaged and painted elements onto the slide and 16mm film evokes the optical cinema of Oskar Fischinger, Len Lye and Norman McLaren. With the gallery bathed in the chromatic light and the whirrs and clicks of the analogue projectors, the installation feels like a love letter to these early cinematic figures.

Over at Newcastle University, Hatton Gallery presents a solo exhibition of **Peter Yates**. With over 40 paintings, the exhibition offers an overview of Yates's work as an artist. Working in partnership with Gordon Ryder, Yates's architectural practice was active predominantly in the North East (incidentally, it was only through discovering his work that I realised many of my favourite postwar buildings in the region were designed by the firm). The exhibition showcases early figurative paintings such as *Mourn, County Down*, 1939, which reveals an artist in thrall to figures such as Eric Ravilious with his sober and economical representation of the British landscape. This aesthetic would quickly be superseded by a style that owed a great deal to artists such as John Piper and Edward Bawden. Much of this work portrays an interest in travel and mysticism with oblique and simplified shapes dominating.

Typically painting in ink, gauche and acrylic, these domestic-sized paintings illustrate Yates's keen interest in architectural vernacular and could be seen as research for his day job. During a meeting with Le Corbusier in the 1940s, Yates was denigrated by his hero for 'using all the tricks' and instructed to stop scribbling all over the surface of his work. This chapter marked a shift in Yates's paintings towards a more graphic approach and formal puritanism. Of these later works, *Boat, Knife, Spain*, 1958, offers a neat summation of his skills. The work presents a flick-knife in the foreground of a seascape with the outline of a simplified boat in the background. Both objects are painted the same size, echoing each other's serpentine form. With each item outlined in a crepuscular moonlight, the image is elevated from straight observation into something altogether more surreal. Much is made in this exhibition of Yates's internationalism and his extensive networks with people such as Berthold Lubetkin and Picasso, yet the cumulative affect of the exhibition is that Yates is a stylistic magpie. While he remains a brilliant architect, his art feels supplementary and in the service of grander schemes seen elsewhere.

Francesco Pedraglio
Los Barbaros 2015

'Nervous Skies'
installation view



AA BRONSON

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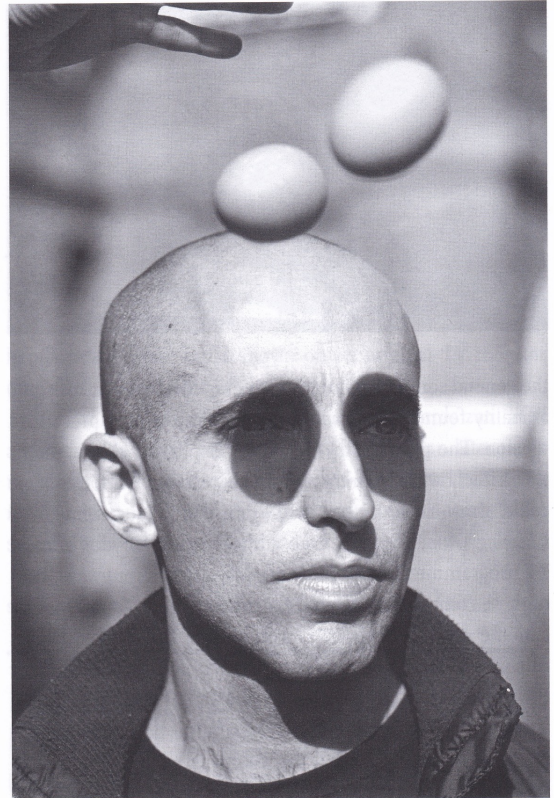
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Oscar Santillan
Armour 2015

Marcus Coates's solo exhibition at Workplace convenes three new works. The lower gallery includes the show's standout piece, *The Sounds of Others: A Biophonic Line*, 2014, which consists of sound files based on animal noises recorded by Geoff Sample. Birdsong, a baby crying, a killer whale and a field of crickets are some of the sounds Coates distorts. In tandem with LED displays that show the concurrent animal and tempo of the recording, Coates speeds up and slows down the sound files, playing DJ to the sounds of nature. The display units recall athletics score boards and alarm clocks, calling to mind Darwinist competition between the species. The work extends Coates's interest in taxonomic representations of nature, and the work is at once a zoological archive and something altogether odder. A crying baby starts to sound similar to a killer whale, forming bizarre sonic ecologies. I'm left thinking about the differing communicative emphasis between species – from communicating fear to expressing hunger. In this work, animal voices become beautifully somatic and melodic as much as anything else. Although humans possess around 30,000 words to express themselves, why does it always feel particularly hard to find the right one to end on? ■

GEORGE VASEY is the curator of the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland and writer based in Gateshead.



London Round-up

IMT • Copperfield • Tintype • Sprüth Magers

The coalition's introduction of fixed-term parliaments has – serendipitously, no doubt – made it much easier for artists to plan shows to coincide with a general election. So what would artists exhibit were they aiming to secure your vote in the forthcoming poll? Not, you'd think, anything like Gordon Shrigley's 'Project for an Unidentified Political Object', even though he is standing for his own Campaign Party in Hackney South and Shoreditch. The voters are unlikely to be impressed by his 22-page manifesto, not so much because they disagree but because they will be baffled. Shrigley parodies structuralist artspeak in explaining that he proposes only to generate a space for the imagination of his electorate. His clinching point is typical, urging the voter to consider the possibility of 'an oxymoronic territory of atemporality'. Asked to boil his vision down, he offered: 'I have nothing to offer, but offer itself,' and has gone on to issue posters with slogans such as: 'I've seen the future and it doesn't exist.' It's an appealing satire of the political pretence to know best. Moreover, with a consistency which we would applaud in politicians, Shrigley also avoids expressing any views in his accompanying exhibition – in contrast with much 'political art'. What visitors see are three vintage photographs blown up to poster size and a sculptural form like a set of MDF steps, the highest with the outline markings

of a crown. Shrigley associates the steps with an aspiration to seek truth by ascending nearer to God, but they can also be read as a bar chart of votes cast, or a podium which the winner will mount. The photographs are of: Yuri Gagarin, inverted as if spinning in zero gravity; a Soviet ground control; and a German family group in front of the sort of construction which looked like the future in 1970. Perhaps there is a further critique of aspiration here, but I suspect you have to like his show, just as you have to vote Shrigley, for what he doesn't do rather than for what he does.

Oscar Santillan's solo show at Copperfield became political by accident when Cumbria Tourism's complaints about it reached the national papers. That took the young Ecuadorian artist by surprise, even though it was a provocation of sorts to remove what one might call the mountain tip – 'the top inch' – from England's highest point on Scarfell Pike and display this small chip of rock as *The Intruder*, 2015. Maybe all publicity is good publicity, but that was a pity, as it struck me as the least interesting piece of a varied and imaginative exhibition. 'To Break a Silence into Smaller Silences' was at its best in exploring human and animal behaviours, and how the gap between them might be bridged. *The Wandering Kingdoms*, 2013, looked at how we relate to birds. It combined the notations which served to document their songs prior to the development of recording technologies, the broadcast of musical performances of those scores and photographs of the woodland environments in which the birds might be found. A close examination of the photographs revealed that



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