

TRANSMISSION

Hannah Rae Alton

Tommy Grace

Rory Macbeth

Mark Selby

curated by Monica Meriggi

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curated by **Monica Meriggi**
at Grey Area Gallery Brighton

Exhibition: 16 - 31 January 2010

Private View: Friday 15th January, 7-9pm

Open: Thurs-Sun, 1-5pm

Artists Talk: Saturday 23rd January, 7.30pm

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LOTTERY FUNDED

Transmission is an attempt to explore through art the complex nature of communication.

Looking at language and its breakdowns but also considering human behaviours and beliefs the research led to the encounter with the ambiguous nature of meaning and meaninglessness.

It is as though the formation of the meaningful had some ultimate chemical origin, 'parts of speech' combine into propositional molecules through electrovalent attraction, or, where that attraction is lacking, remain in solution as free radicals. If art has had a scientific mission, we find it in the exposure of such mechanisms, in a nonlinear display of the OCCASIONS of meaning. For meaning is not, for image or word, in things; it is in people¹.

What follows is a transmission of thoughts and ideas from artists and friends that in different ways contributed to the creation of meaning...

¹ Hollis Frampton, *False Impressions*, 1979.

“It occurred to Gregor that there may be a greater truth, that everything was not one great big joke, that even in the sound of an unclear passing word, there must be a bold inherent definiteness, he thought- and at this began to feel free, as if the slate had been wiped clean; the mobile vibrated against his body, and grabbing it, as if this was the source of all of his troubles, he tossed it, so far that even the cop with the help of the same dog that they use to find drowned bodies, would be left un-wagging, gawping at this and that dumbfounded. He roused his inner-self; no one was with him, and he was leaving the war; the statues, in whom was a latent wisdom in their frozen attitudes, had a kind of aura glowing out of them; locked into that shining from their bodies was a joy that grabbed him forcefully, and he shook each of their academic hands, like a burger-cook, gripping each one in a traditional clasp without wiping his hands, -for hands that work are never dirty, and these good absentees proved, well beyond any doubt, that having given their existence over to being stuck on the verge, they had shopped themselves into keeping schtum, and that no man had the wherewithal to change their fuse”

RORY MACBETH

Excerpt from “The Wanderer” by FRANZ KAFKA (2008/09)

I CAN'T TALK NOW...I'M ON THE PHONE

Re-watching Dom Joly's infamous satirical take on the use of a mobile phone for Trigger Happy TV (where he would shout loudly into a mobile phone in inappropriate contexts), I was reminded of how the joke was so easily subsumed into the social psyche and spurned an irresistible desire to imitate his performance and re-live the joke. Humour, in its various guises and to varying levels of success, can act as a tool that simultaneously 'brings us together' whilst acting disruptively.

"If humour recalls us to *sensus communis*, then it does this by momentarily pulling us out of common sense, where jokes function as moments of *dissensus communis*"¹

By exposing, denouncing or deriding existing social or cultural practices one can set up, as a comic technique, and an artistic one, a suspended moment of reversal. That fleeting moment allows for a refreshed viewing of the subject matter and an admittance of what we subconsciously bring into our lives.

We are all aware of the vociferous nature of technological progress and its constant injection into everyday practice. On the whole, we accept its intended function to make things 'easier', but we are not always aware of what we lose in the process of acceptance and utilitisation (made more difficult by the dizzying abstraction,

differentiation and over-hyped marketing of its associated commodities). It has undeniably allowed almost instantaneous communication over vast distances but to allow such speed there must be a lightening of the load, a 'throwing over the side' of any deadweight. The removal of physicality and the body, in all its heavy molecular complexity, is the easy answer in allowing succour with that super-fast broadband. But, the subtlety of communication therefore becomes lost when rendered in a browser and we are now in a position where 'text' or email can provide a dressing screen to hide the bashful modesty of speech acts.

Monty Python once did a sketch titled "The Semaphore version of *Wuthering Heights*", concluding with faux-adverts for the next in the series, "Julius Cesar on an Aldis Lamp" and "Gunfight at the OK Coral in Morse Code". Their parodies humorously pulled-apart the removal of speech with a clunky, alternative communication device. In that moment of contextual reversal, we see the subtlety of the original dialogue and narrative being replaced by a formulaic method of signs and signals. It is this loss of complex inter-relations that reminds me of the unintended confusion and offence I once caused when attempting to write sarcasm in the format of an email. It seems, unfortunately, that the humanistic elements of my jovial approach were lost in translation.

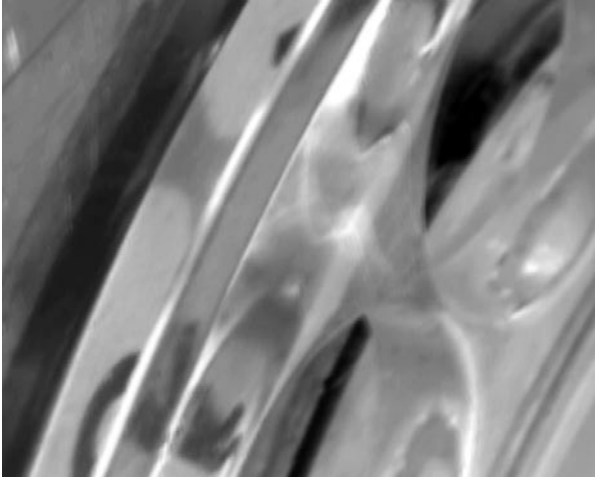
Mark Selby

¹ On Humour, Simon Critchley (London: Routledge, 2002) p.18

HANNAH RAE ALTON $x = -(\sin t); y = -(\cos t); z = -t$
was originally commissioned for display on the internet. “It led me to think about the difficulty of trying to get a point across in cyberspace, and the way in which we are often exposed to multiple and confusing streams of moving image”.

“I was making research about aphasia for this film. Aphasia is a neurological disorder caused by damage to an area of the brain usually above the left ear (either by head injury or, more commonly, stroke). It affects language comprehension and production. In some manifestations it can leave the sufferer able to understand spoken language, understand questions being posed, and believe they are making a coherent and considered response, whereas in actual fact what comes out of their mouth is incomprehensible, a mixture of invented and misplaced words, a breakdown of grammar. I made the sound script for the piece using a phase shift system to interweave two texts into one - online encyclopedia texts, written by their consumers. The only corresponding visual text is non-verbal; I have an interest in punctuation as stage direction and the imperative sense of these graphic marks seemed to fit with the commanding nature of online moving image advertising”

HANNAH RAE ALTON
 $x = -(\sin t); y = -(\cos t); z = -t$
(downward spiral) 2008
Digital video, 6 minutes
Sound by Thomas Stone



TOMMY GRACE's text collages appear to have been born out of his work as a graphic designer, yet they reject text's communicative function. Using type as raw material Grace pastes columns of nonsense Latin script into neatly ordered but impenetrable op-abstracts. Through these, Grace creates subtle allegories for the ways in which we see (or fail to see) that which is before us.

For the series *Greeking* Grace has designed and printed newspaper using typographer's 'dummy' text. The origins of *Lorem Ipsum* are contested, but it is thought to have begun with an unknown printer who adapted a short extract of Latin from Cicero's 45BC treatise on ethics, 'The Extremes of Good and Evil' to make a specimen book. Though centuries have since elapsed, the text remains in everyday use, its function essentially the same: to emphasise form over meaningful content so the reader is not distracted.

To function, it must be both simultaneously familiar and incredulous. Familiar in as such as the phrasing, the sentence lengths, the distribution of the letters etc. ought to appear to the casual eye like readable English. And necessarily incredulous so that no right minded printer would ever waste the ink to print it in the belief it was the final copy.

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Nor again is there anyone who loves or pursues or desires to obtain pain of itself, because it is pain, but because occasionally circumstances occur in which toil and pain can procure him some great pleasure.

– Cicero 45 BC
1.10.32 of “de Finibus Bonorum et Malorum”

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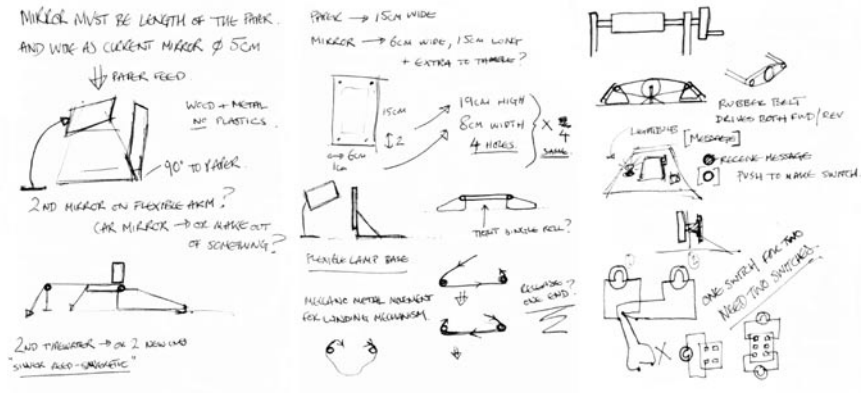
RORY MACBETH For *Predictive Text* Macbeth sent out horoscopes reconfigured by the predictive text function on mobile phones. *The Wanderer by Franz Kafka* is the title of his current translation of a Kafka novel into English without any knowledge of the original language and without the use of a vocabulary.

Ever since inventing a student at Central St Martin's foundation, who, fully enrolled, existed purely in admin and rumour, and who passed the course with a portfolio gleaned at the last minute from bins, Macbeth seeks to unpick our assumptions about what actually seems to be around us. The clash of reality with ideals, of language with the real world, and a constant sense of disappointment with what things claim and what they deliver have been his ongoing inspiration. The work aims to undo our expectations of what is around us, and cajoles and sometimes tricks the audience into being complicit in the work.

RORY MACBETH
Predictive Text (Aries) 2007
horoscopes translated by predictive text and sent by phone



MARK SELBY *Lets Sit Down and Talk* plays with functionality and its distortions and refers to today's technological enhanced way of communicating. This ironic and dysfunctional piece of furniture speaks of alienation and distance and it is the result of the artist's interest in the use and misuse of technology and its impact on physical relationships; through his work Selby poses questions on how the communication between individuals can be obstructed and transformed by the complexity of our technological tools.



MARK SELBY
Lets Sit Down And Talk 2008
 90cm x 120cm x 60cm

Wood, Electric Motors, Light Bulbs, Mirrors and Paper



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First Published by *collapse*
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Thanks to all the artists
and contributors
especially Dan, Arnold, Hannah, Tommy,
Rory, Mark and Rowena; a special
gratitude to the Art Council England
as well as Ben and Lynsey from Ditto
Press.

**GREY
AREA**



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catalogue printed by

Ditto Press London

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