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TEH NW

Illustration as a practice, as an idea, as a tool, is so powerful, charming and winsome, seeing it differently as an object or practice feels impossible. When the world is wrapped and framed by illustration, from children's books to the engraving on gravestones, how can we use illustration to help us see illustration differently? It's a project **DARRYL CLIFTON** and **RACHEL GANNON** set themselves in a major 2015 gallery show **MUT MUT**. In this feature they use the work in Mut Mut, and the film they made about the show, as a platform to explore new ways of seeing illustration.



Laura Carlin, *Travellers (Boy with coins)*, 2015, Laura Carlin, *Travellers (Mother and Daughter)*, 2015



Jack Sachs and Darryl Clifton, *Pastoral Man*, 2015, Anna Lomax, *Maggie's* 2015



Installation View, Rachel Gannon, *Dreamland, Cairo, detail*, 2015 (foreground)

The following series of questions, thoughts, statements, proclamations and prompts is derived from two projects, one called *Immaterial Boundary*¹ a short documentary film about 'visionary' Illustrative practice and the other, *Mut Mut*² a recent gallery based show foregrounding object-based work produced by []³. Some of the words are extracted directly from the interviews with the practitioners featured in *Immaterial Boundary*, others are deliberately twisted and misshapen by us. And all the rest come from us. It is a list.

We have no ambition to be definitive and/or provocative, but more *synthetic* in our approach, more 'and' than 'or'. We are trying to respond to the impossibility of this idea of 'the new'. It would, in fact, be more accurate to say that this is a meagre attempt to extrapolate 'the now', or the 'just then'. But for affirmation's sake let's stick to calling it a response to 'the new'. Our ambition is to respond to 'the new'. It is a flawed ambition. It is a flawed list.

In responding we have used the section headings of the film; Material, Style, Boundaries and Craft. This implies structure but this is not the case and really the piece presents as a series of disconnected phrases, questions and non-sequiturs. There are also some additional thoughts. It is fragmentary. Its brevity is its virtue. A list.

We prefix the sections with the theme. We change the definite to the indefinite. It is part of our style. Footnotes are your friend.

FOOTNOTES

1. *Immaterial Boundary* features: Pablo Jones Soler, Anna Lomax, Peter Nencini and Jack Sachs. The film was produced by Darryl Clifton and Rachel Gannon.

<http://thisistomorrow.info/articles/immaterial-boundary>

2. The participants in the exhibition were: Laura Carlin, Darryl Clifton, Vallée Duhamel, Rachel Gannon, Pablo Jones Soler, Anna Lomax, Peter Nencini, Robert Nicol, Nous Vous, Jack Sachs. The exhibition was hosted by Assembly Point.

www.assemblypoint.xyz

"Mut Mut is a playful compression of the Latin phrase mutatis mutandis meaning 'the necessary changes having been made'. It reflects an observation that illustration practice is experiencing a necessary evolution. Moving away from the conventional context of contemporary Illustration, and its mediation through either print or screen, these illustrators fabricate 'one off' bespoke or sculptural pieces. The individual object relies on the audience to come to 'it' rather than 'it' go to the audience. This is a conscious and deliberate rejection of the ephemeral and the reproduced traditionally associated with commercial practice. Instead we see a move towards the concrete, the tangible and the physical."

3. We leave this space blank deliberately. The temptation would have been to describe all the practitioners as Illustrators and it is true that they were all educated through a discipline we call Illustration. It is also true to say that they work or have worked commercially and in response to a client led brief but to describe them, exclusively, as Illustrators is problematic. The participants in the film were: Pablo Jones Soler, Anna Lomax, Peter Nencini and Jack Sachs.

1. A NEW MATERIAL in Illustration is:

Pointlessness, functionlessness, the joke, the genuine fake and the cultural gene. The power of preference(s). A thing that is of and for debate. A 'yield', an agglomeration of likes, hits, retweets and snaps. Scale-less, scale-able, hollowed out and filled in. A refractive index – crafted nothingness and upside down value. The refractive index – the 'dark' mirror of 'dark' matter. Dark matter, an unseen thing adding mass and gravity⁴. A fifty dollar digital apple, a neon egg, a faulty twin, a dismembered cock, a laminate sandwich, a mouse fodder, a symbol of care, an indefinite article, a bouncing globule, a pigeon tower, a.... Encoded, un-coded, decoded. Temporal, here and there, gone – not forgotten, de-remembered. Fleeting and binary. In/of/out/of the social realm. Falsehoods, simulations of the then and the now and the next. Utility/idolatry – Symbolization/Iconology – Personification/Narcissism -Lifestyle/Totemism⁵. True meaning, an age of the materialised symbol. A slightly dead-ness. A theory. Fetish and commodity. Commodity fetish.



Clark Keatley, *Lowe Alpine Convert Mitten*, 2015

2. A NEW STYLE in Illustration is:

The always there. The tautologies and echoes. The framework and the language, a secret and a shout. Non discourse, non debate, non binary, non oppositional. Fashion is fashion and familiarity. The lit and the surface and the go harder. Emphasized, overdone, luxurious, kitsch, luxuriously kitsch. Pot, steel, clay, made, disaggregated, cheerios, polos, coffee grounds, spectacle, moving, wobbling, disintegrating, aggregating, stud tightener to anti-sleep, bar and chicken's foot. The atmospheres⁶. The gestures. Revisions and reprisals⁷. A cake-walk, shifting terrains. Amplification. An inside-ness, an implicitness, an imploding.

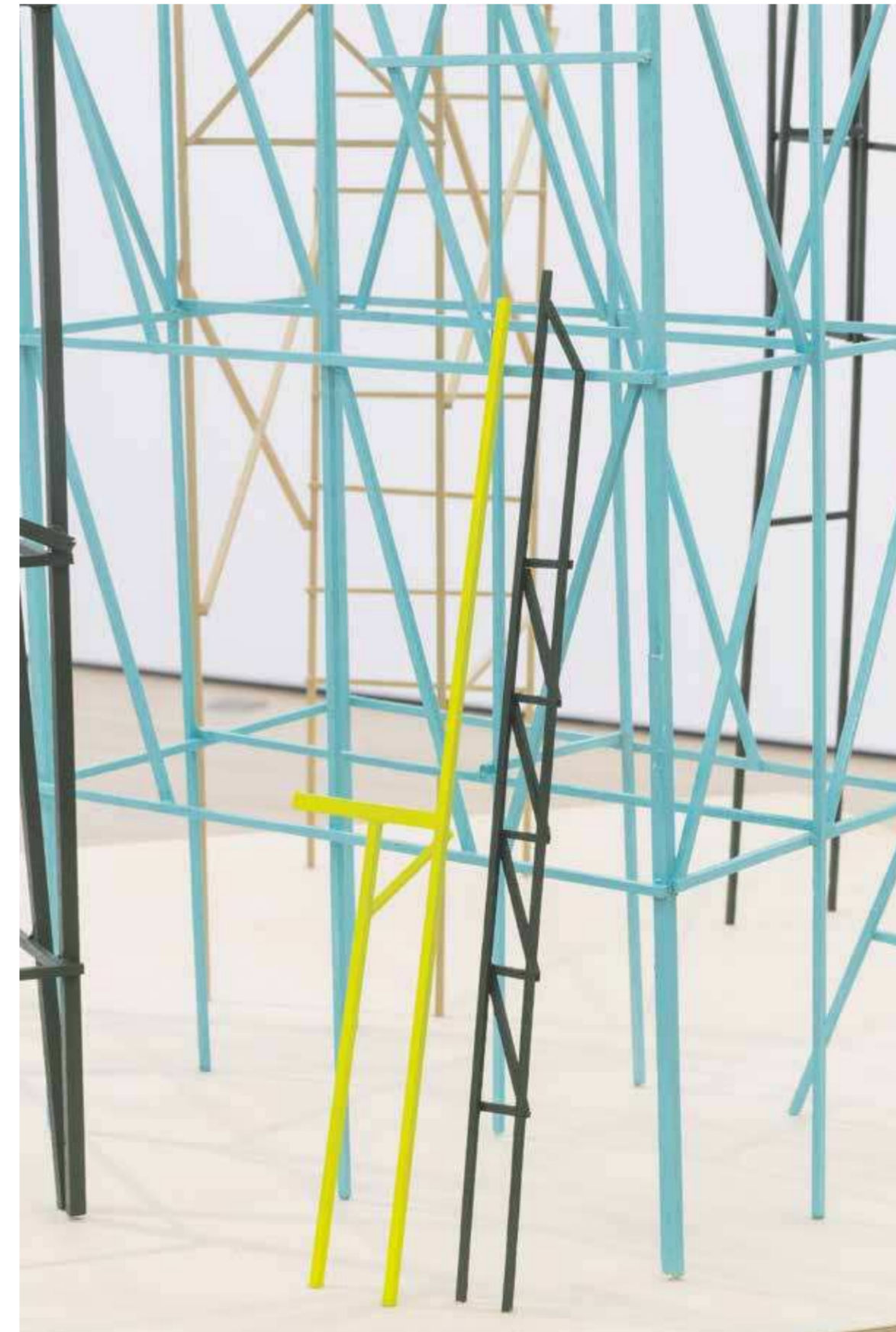
Our ambition is to respond to 'the new'. It is a flawed ambition



Peter Nencini, *Porphyric Hod (F) detail*, 2015



Installation view



Rachel Gammon, *Dreamland, Cairo detail*, 2015

FOOTNOTES

4. For more on 'creative dark matter' see Joshua Simon's analysis of Gregory Sholette's book *Dark Matter* on pp.144-146 of *Neomaterialism*.

5. Paraphrased from Sut Jhally's 'religious stages of meaning' described in *Neomaterialism* by Joshua Simon, Sternberg (2013): *Utility/idolatry* – move beyond function, liberate from utility *Symbolization/Iconology* – 'it' as an abstract representation of social values.

Personification/Narcissism – to form intimate connections with what the 'it' represents.

Lifestyle/Totemism – merging the above, defining a group, building a 'lifestyle'.

6. For more on material atmospheres see *The System of Objects* by Jean Baudrillard, specifically II Structures of Atmosphere pp.30 – 66.

7. "Plastic laminates had been around for a while. Cheap and cheery, the material has graced all kinds of restaurants and bars, though over time it could be most commonly found in corporate eateries like McDonalds and Baskin Robbins. Barbara Radice notes that, "Plastic laminates today are still a metaphor for vulgarity, poverty, and bad taste." Memphis sought to question this, bringing low-class laminates into high-class interior collectibles, and, in the process, paving the way for a reception in which their products were recognized as simultaneously avant-garde and ugly." From: "Stuck Inside of Memphis: a Non-Linear, Associative, Ahistorical Meditation on Things Loosely Related to Memphis," a forthcoming pamphlet by Justin Beal and Rob Giampietro.

<http://blog.linedandunlined.com/post/404171838/on-memphis-pattern-and-macpaint> (26.1.2016 | 10.17am)

The framework and the language, a secret and a shout



Clark Keatley, Ruins, 2015

I am an Illustrator, engineer,
 manufacturer. A collaborator,
 industrio-domestic

3. A NEW BOUNDARY in Illustration is:
 Information rubbing up against information⁸.
 Where everything is in focus.
 Where everything is epidermal.
 An action.
 A 3D designer, art director, instigator,
 social commentator.
 The act of Illustrating. Embedded.
 Where the thing (Illustration) is inert,
 until becoming active in the hands of the user.
 Where product is redundant and process is King.
 Death of the noun. Birth of the verb.
 A retarded understanding of Self.
 Excavated meaning.
 Where Illustration is 'authorless'⁹.



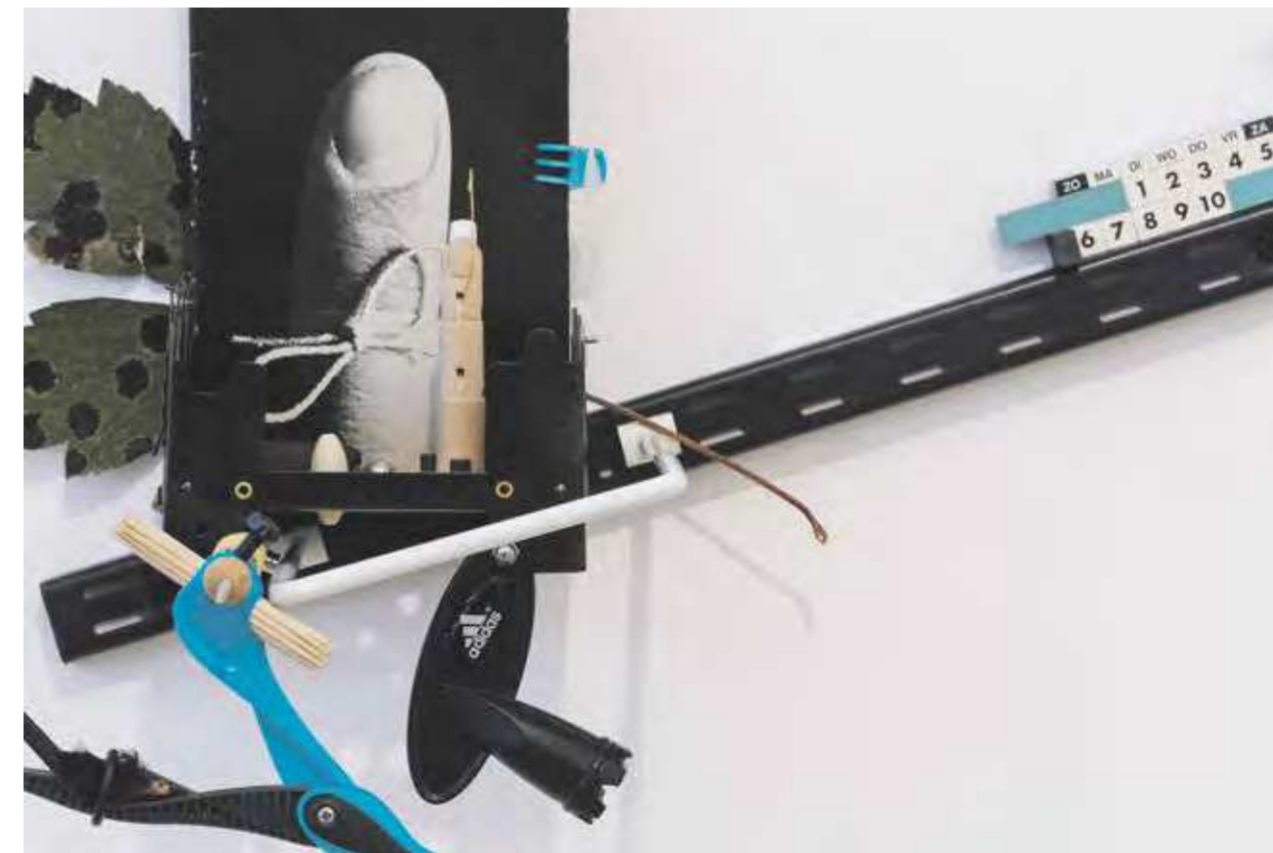
Robert Nicol, Untitled, 2015



Laura Carlin, Travellers (Boy on horse), 2015



Peter Nencini, Porphyric Hod (F), 2015



Peter Nencini, Porphyric Hod (B) detail, 2015

4. A NEW CRAFT in Illustration is:
 The space between image, type, ornament.
 The space between tools and getting to zero.
 Vulgarity, poverty, bad taste, avant-garde, ugly.
 A dead wood, a cold latte, a mangled collaboration,
 a forced union, a catharsis, purgation, release.
 I am an Illustrator, engineer, manufacturer.
 A collaborator, industrio-domestic.
 There are ceaseless negotiations with labour.
 Interfacing, directing. Dumb questioning.
 Non sequential – simultaneous.
 Explosion to implosion.
 Made and made again.
 No author, no auteur, no end-point.

Mut Mut, group exhibition curated by Daryll Clifton and Rachel Gannon. Assembly Point, 2015 Artists: Laura Carlin, Darryl Clifton, Vallée Duhamel, Rachel Gannon, Pablo Jones Soler, Anna Lomax, Peter Nencini, Robert Nicol, Nous Vous and Jack Sachs

Immaterial Boundary was presented at the VaroomLab Visionaries symposium at Birmingham City University, November 2015

FOOTNOTES

8. "When information is brushed against information the results are startling and effective. The perennial quest for involvement, fill in, takes many forms" from *The Medium is the Massage* by Marshal McLuhan and Quentin Fiore.
<https://www.brainpickings.org/2011/06/20/the-medium-is-the-massage-shepard-fairley-marshall-mcluhan/> (26.1.2016 | 10:50am)

9. "There was some idea of being experimental with Illustration. A sense of moving away from application, the yoke of having a brief, the yoke of needing to talk to a third party or an art director about what you are doing and have to make changes. And that was somehow the enemy of expression and creativity. But I think, in a way in step with people talking about artists working in the public domain and arts relationship to labour...erm...I think its become really an interesting time for Illustration and Illustration looking at.....Illustration that is authorless!"

Peter Nencini quoted from *Immaterial Boundary*.