

Art

MONTHLY

NOVEMBER 2015 | No 391 | UK £4.80 US\$7.40

Rosalind Nashashibi

Interviewed by George Vasey

Happiness Inc.

Jonathan P Watts

Lost

Paul O'Kane

Jennet Thomas

Profile by Lauren Velvick

and image, and a heightening of sensations. *The Forever Loop* speaks to a condition, foreseen by Félix Guattari in the early 1990s, in which the dominance of mass-media channels has given way to an emancipated era of collective-individual appropriation and exponential interconnectivities. True of the sex and pornography industry too, the interactive sexual fantasy of strip clubs has transferred to the computer screen; cam-girls and boys now sit conveniently beside internet tabs of Facebook selfies. With this 'post-media condition' as backdrop, Peake unpacks the emotive and lustful experience of the flesh. The tantalising sharpness of HD transcends the digital space of the TV screens, spilling out into the physicality of the gallery environment. The unclad bodies of the youthful dancers perfectly imitate the implausible liquescence of the animation and converge in and out of precise synchronicity with salacious choreography from past works, in a perpetual loop of mimicry and simulation, referent and referral.

While Peake's performers are often described as 'sexual objects', his work steadfastly refuses to fall into gender or sexual binary norms. The choreography of lascivious actions is enacted by male and female performers alike – groin thrusting, hip gyrating, cock jerking – excavating the ingrained social and cultural complexities of viewing and presenting the human body. Lacking recognition or awareness of the audience around them, the dancers become a modern day version of erotic 19th-century nude *tableaux vivant*, but, like the insipid images of a glossy magazine, there is a shallowness to their presence, as if they had stepped directly out of an American Apparel advertisement. Lacking intimacy, they act out prescribed steps of commercialised sexualisation. In this realisation, the sexed-up syntax becomes impotent, rendering the performers sexless: rather than lifeless objects of desire, they are the galvanised embodiment of critique. ■

SOPHIE J WILLIAMSON is a writer and curator based in London.

North-West Round-up

Bury Sculpture Centre • StoreyG2 • Mostyn

It is slightly disconcerting to encounter a scrolling LED sign reporting bizarre stories as live news events – 'World to end in 100 days as giant horn is sounded in York', for instance. Equally disconcerting is the discovery of an egg inscribed with the message 'Christ is coming'. But Hilary Jack has made Bury Sculpture Centre into a kind of parallel world, perhaps no darker than the one we already inhabit, but one overshadowed by the sense of an impending end.

The artist's biggest solo show to date takes its title from an embedded detail which can be found poking out of the pocket of a waterproof jacket hanging inside a rickety wooden hut. It is a well-thumbed copy of Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*, a potpourri of evidence pointing to a looming apocalypse, which was originally published in 1970 and later turned into a film narrated by Orson Welles. The hut itself, entitled *The Prophet*, 2015, is made of discards

from the felling process at Macclesfield forest, with a roof made of found corrugated iron and a couple of old doors. It is not difficult to imagine yourself sitting on the front porch, Bible in hand, waiting for the end times.

The show is strongly timber-based, featuring a series of sculptural images from a chilly borderland situated somewhere between the US wilderness retreats of the survivalists and the scruffy remains of what writer Robert Macfarlane calls the 'English eerie'. In one corner of the gallery sits *In Angland Al is Broc*, 2015, a grim-looking, life-size example of the torture device that was used to test women as witches, its seat hauled up with ropes on a block and tackle, hanging over a pond of mirrors. The artist based its construction on an image on an old postcard, and similar souvenirs mix with other found objects in several smaller installations such as *Summit*, 2015, in which rocks, grass, electric light and a mirror nestle under a wall-mounted group of postcards of Lake District scenes with yet more rocks.

The whole show displays a strong awareness of land and the changes rendered upon it by human intervention and interpretation: at its centre is *Turquoise Bag in a Tree*, 2015. The tree in question – suspended from the gallery ceiling – closely resembles one that features in Goya's series of etchings 'The Disasters of War', 1810-20, and from its top branch hangs not a human body but the painted bronze cast of a plastic carrier bag. Despite the announcement of the government's new law imposing a 5p charge on each of these bags in larger chain shops, one is left pondering the wasteland of non-biodegradable polyethylene everywhere that will linger for the next few thousand years.

It is necessary to utilise digital technology to understand another landscape which is addressed in **Landed: Freeman's Wood**, a series of works that are only accessible online from StoreyG2, the new version of Lancaster's Storey Gallery following the closure of its physical space due to the loss of ACE funding (Artnotes AM359). On the website are details of three artworks: Goldin + Senneby's *A3 – A Plt*, 2015, in which the artists bought a small plot of land and commissioned a playscript concerning its possible history; *Freeman's Wood – the Game*, 2015, which is a board game about land ownership by Sans Facon, a collaborative art practice between French architect Charles Blanc and British artist Tristan Surtees; and *Trespass*, 2015, an iPhone app designed by Layla Curtis. A recent visit to Lancaster to meet StoreyG2's director John Angus gave me the chance to see the real Freeman's Wood and experience *Trespass*, which uses GPS tracking to take you on a series of walks around the area, iPhone in hand.

Freeman's Wood, which includes wooded areas as well as old sports fields, has been used for years by local people for leisure and was long considered common land. Lying south-west of the city between the River Lune and a large post-industrial area, the former site of a huge lino factory, it is certainly 'edgeland'. But in 2012 a series of heavy-duty, spiked metal fences appeared bearing warning signs to keep off because this was private property. Efforts to discover who owned Freeman's Wood led eventually to a company registered in Bermuda. Meanwhile, the 'Keep Off' signs were nearly all vandalised, some very ingeniously, including one painted over with words quoted from a 17th-century popular poem protesting against the enclosures movement:

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'They hang the man and flog the woman / That steals the goose from off the common / But let the greater villain loose / That steals the common from the goose.'

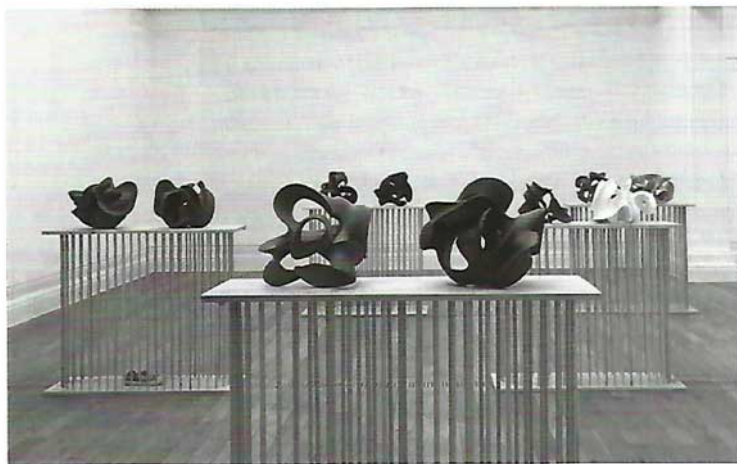
Trespass enables the user to hear interviews with local people familiar with Freeman's Wood as they walk various pathways around the site. Some of the interviews can only be heard inside the fenced-off zone, meaning the user has to 'trespass' by going around the fences through gaps that have been left for deer to roam. At first, Apple had qualms about approving the app, because it believed that trespassing was a criminal offence in the UK (which it isn't), but it relented when told the local city council was in principle designating three public footpaths across the site. Inside the fence, paths are still fresh, indicating the place is still being walked, although, as some interviewees testify, all evidence of the wonderful-sounding 'Ewok village' that was built by local youngsters for BMX bike-riding, skateboarding and whizzing down zip-wires several years ago has been completely eradicated by the landowners. Whatever happens to the land, the app will preserve these recorded testimonials, which will always come to life visually, too, on the GPS tracker.

Bizarre constructions, none of them with titles, also populate



Hilary Jack
In England All is Broc
2015

Camille Blatrix
No School 2015



Camille Blatrix's first UK solo show, 'No School', at Mostyn. Wooden vitrines like elongated cages, raised on bars of dowelling, contain in one case a pair of old plimsolls. On top, each displays a pair of hollow, swirling, abstract ceramic forms in bold colours. But dotted about there are also little gobbets of pink bubble-gum. On closer examination, these prove to be carved out of wood. The 'gum' indicates a playful disregard for formality, and perhaps represents thoughts of childhood the artist experienced when he journeyed to Llandudno during the gloomy off-season winter period to research his show.

Blatrix, winner of the Prix Fondation d'Entreprise Ricard 2014, is associated with his polished, techno-sculptural work, frequently melding marquetry with curious, dripping steel forms. But in Llandudno, his nostalgia for family, friends, past holidays and 'no school' led him to involve his mother, Dorothee Lorient, a ceramicist, his father François, a former painter, and his friend Camille Blin, a designer, in bringing together this exhibition, which takes on a rather more reverential turn in the linked second gallery. Here, at the far end, a pair of François' paintings of bucolic summer landscapes is shown, in one of which baby Camille is being suckled by his mother. The paintings are positioned with a sense of significance that echoes that of altarpieces, but the walls surrounding them are scratched with artificial 'cracks', patched up with sticking plasters and more blobs of wooden bubble-gum. Approaching the paintings is a series of parallel 'screens' containing panels and console-like constructions that look like hybrids, as if tape cassettes interbred with floppy disks, finding a home in bodywork made of beige plastic. Such immaculately made assemblages avoid the clichés of retro science fiction because of their personal context, and the overall sense of self-deprecation. Pink bubble-gum, like turquoise plastic bags, can scale aesthetic heights as well as bring us down to earth. ■

BOB DICKINSON is a writer and broadcaster based in Manchester.

London Round-up

Limoncello • Kate MacGarry • Beaconsfield

Where do you store your secrets? In a diary, perhaps? Or maybe you would never be foolish enough to allow them to leave the safety of your head. The Big Scholar, the 39-year-old central character of *Bedwyr Williams's* video *Writ Stink*, takes an extreme approach, choosing to regularly download his secrets onto memory sticks and then place them inside a sturdy flight case stored within a cave.

Williams's film animates a series of his sparse, monochrome ink drawings (a number of which are displayed alongside the video at his exhibition at Limoncello). The drawings provide the visual signposts to a tale that is woven in detail by a voice-over, which takes us on a journey with The Big Scholar as he walks to the cave to deliver his latest stash of secrets to the case. Along the way the narrator offers up his observations, mostly harsh, on what he sees. 'Would it surprise you if I told you glaziers have a cruel streak?' he remarks as The Big Scholar passes two such workers on the path. 'Not all of them but a fair few', he continues. 'What if I told you these two are discussing fantastically elaborate ways to kill people.'

The Big Scholar himself does not escape the voice-over's withering assessment, which notes that, when he stops to eat a flapjack and type out some story ideas on a laptop, 'a big man typing is an easy thing to dislike'. While The Big Scholar may be at pains to hide his innermost thoughts and acts on computer hardware, the others he