



Gabriele Beveridge interviewed by Paul Luckraft, 8 February 2014

Paul Luckraft: For your Invites presentation you are showing a series of new works across the walls and floor of the space. How much do you think about your installations as an overall composition?

Gabriele Beveridge: Quite a lot, but indirectly. First of all, the works are individually conceived and hold themselves as internal dialogues between the materials. But that same process of forming relations also comes out in the way they appear together. It's not necessarily a question of 'composition' in the space – it's more an issue of the relations between the works, the weighting of things. Sometimes there is an idiosyncrasy in the space, like the benches, and that becomes something that also has to be negotiated. The important thing is the materials and the web of individual work's relations. I think when those balances are resolved the whole will feel right.

PL: Images of faces – often stylised ones from advertising and magazines – play a central role in your work. What draws you to these?

GB: I suppose the face is just about the most obvious thing in the world. Everyone has one and we even like to find them in trees and rocks and stains and other anthropomorphised objects. So it's a kind of universal. But universals are also the most mysterious and amorphous subjects. Did you know when you look at the face of someone you know, your brain is only using a certain amount of information from your eyes, and the rest is supplied by memory to save energy. So faces are spectral. They're both the most personal thing about us, and a kind of ID for the world. As Lacan says, they're the mask of the other's unknowable. Today the world is more than ever filled with pictures of people's faces – there's some website about that I think. I'm drawn to these stylised images in part because they allow a sense of time in – both through the symbolic aspects of the image, like a

certain period style, and through what we sense as the physical age of the materials, made apparent through sun-bleaching or yellowing from acid-content paper. There's nothing nostalgic there, but rather a directly material way of giving a feeling of time-context for the present, which is something current systems often seek to eliminate.

PL: Specific materials seem particularly important to you – there is a recurring use of marble, copper and sand for example. Alongside formal properties of colour or texture they seem to be fulfilling symbolic or metaphoric functions too. Can you talk a little about this?

GB: I think this is a question of representation more generally. Of course we read materials symbolically as you suggest, but images too. I think this borderline of things fading in and out between symbol and material experience is where the dreamier things happen. I'm drawn to elemental things – almost in a New Age kind of spectrum – but I process these things like crystals into aesthetic configurations, so they're displaced from a metaphysical world into one of aesthetic judgement and isolation in the gallery. These materials are somehow orphaned here. They open up a great gulf of ambiguity between symbolic and material orders, but also provide a sense of estrangement from the gallery context, and cast the whole experience and system into question.

PL: Do you see your work in the lineage of collage and assemblage, particularly that of Dada and Surrealism? It seems to be a technique, both in practical and conceptual terms, which has remained vital throughout the 20th century and into the 21st. There's the current retrospective of Hannah Höch at Whitechapel Gallery for instance...

GB: Well, I would think of collage as a way of looking just as much as a technique. In that

sense you can see it in the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. A little scene here... a bit of architectural suggestion there. It's a modern way of thinking that expresses a feeling of a lot of things happening in parallel, of time being less straightforward than we can grasp. So I think that lineage takes on a certain formal characteristic, of making use of appropriated materials and images, but this happens quite naturally as these materials become ubiquitous at the beginning of the 20th century. In the sense that these collage materials carry very specific connotations intended in their original context, I think that lineage is very much something I feel engaged with. I feel like the logic I employ in making combinations of materials has something in common with both Dada and Surrealism, but at the same time it's not an explicit or meta one. Existential intrigues come from both chance and disassociation techniques and that's a productive logic that's very deep in the human psyche.

PL: You studied photography for your BA at Falmouth College of Art. How has this informed the way you work now, and was there a clear break from making your own photographs to using found images?

GB: I think most of all studying photography brought me into this exploration of the relation between time and composition. Between material and it's positioning. Even at its most romantic photography is a kind of appropriation. So I think the gap between making your own photos and found images is very small. Mostly held up by meaningless legal ways of thinking. I think people who are thought of as great photographers of subjects are often closer to journalists or theatre directors – they can direct things to appear in front of the lens in a certain way. But the technical aspect, the 'light drawing' as it is literally from the Greek, is something very different. And for me, working with this material photograph can come either before or after the shutter opens and closes.

For a while now, my starting point has been in the after, but this is mainly motivated, as I mentioned before, by the interest in the time characteristics that accrue in the photographic materials I source. The way their indexical qualities fade into generic drifts turned cyan.

PL: Does the urban environment act as a catalyst for your work? There are suggestions of the natural sublime, but perhaps framed or refracted through something detached or unattainable?

GB: The urban and the natural don't really exist so distinctly, or rather they are defined by relation to each other. There are palm trees in Los Angeles, you know. They grow from sidewalks in front of filthy car repair shops. For me there's a kind of ecstatic truth in this relation. The 'natural sublime' you suggest is something that's been thoroughly commodified and sold back to culture as computer backgrounds and package vacations. So there's a certain level of corruption I'm sifting through. There's no proper 'outside' to any of this so I don't attempt or even desire that position. Instead I'm blending these symbolic orders to arrive at something less strictly symbolic, more hybrid with material experience. In that sense, the promises of these images and materials is yes, unattainable. But I'm more interested in what is attained with a different kind of attention. I'm shifting the parameters.



Artist's presentation

Gabriele Beveridge: Sunday 30 March, 3pm.
A live event devised by Gabriele Beveridge to accompany her exhibition.

Artist's biography: (b. 1985) lives and works in London, graduating with an MA in Fine Art Media from the Slade School of Fine Art in 2010. Prior to this Beveridge studied BA Photography at Falmouth College of Art. Recent group exhibitions include *Pre-Pop to Post-Human: Collage in the Digital Age*, Hayward Touring, UK, 2013; *Comrades of Time*, Cell Project Space, London, 2013; *The Stand In (or A Glass of Milk)*, Public Fiction, Los Angeles, 2013.

Zabludowicz Collection Invites is dedicated to solo presentations by UK-based artists who do not currently have representation by a commercial gallery in the UK.

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