

Plomp Shop dopps dorp



Andrew Munks interviewed by curator Paul Luckraft, 17 February 2017

Paul Luckraft: When did you first start photographing fish?

Andrew Munks: I made the first one in 2012 for a large floor collage but this wasn't underwater. I then went on to make a series of these for a show I did at Watch It and over the last year and a half have been attempting underwater versions on and off.

PL: How do you decide on which hats and wigs suit which fish? Are you assigning them particular roles or personalities?

AM: Firstly I compiled a box of different possibilities, some made by me and some bought, and when I caught the fish I would pick my favourite one that was of the right size for the fish. Yes I could be assigning them personalities, but also jobs in the case of the nurse.

PL: Do you see the riverbank as a bit like a studio? Or more a place of field research? Or just pure escapism?

AM: Sitting by rivers and lakes is a very worthwhile thing to do whether you are fishing or not. It was the site or location for the photo shoot, essentially.

PL: Taking trips out to locations that might be left behind by change seems of interest to you. You've made video pieces about Silver End in Essex, the modernist village built for workers of Crittall Windows in the 1920s; and the The Kelvedon Hatch 'Secret Nuclear Bunker' in Brentwood.

AM: Yes, nowadays it feels like you have to get there quick before it's gone. Day trips are a good thing to do. When I was at the Slade there were all those brilliant cafes in Soho from the 50s and 60s that have pretty much all gone. I still feel really upset and pissed off about that. I get very excited by being in places where you feel you could be in a different time.

PL: The question of style seems to run through lots of your different projects. Style as in how design movements such

as Art Deco are translated into domestic space, through furniture and frames. Or the look of the 1960s phones the sound plays through in the show. Have you been interested in design for a long time?

AM: Well my parents made the bungalow I grew up in seem like a trip back to the 1930s. So I pretty much had no choice, for which I am very grateful. As a kid we used to go around charity shops and jumble sales looking for bits of Shelley and Susie Cooper and I guess I picked up a strong sense of 'good' and 'bad' taste, which I am probably dealing with now. But yes, I am interested in design and how fashion works, especially in relation to nostalgia.

PL: The sound component of the exhibition will play through the retro telephones. Can you tell me about how music comes into your work?

AM: When I was editing the photographs I had music on most of the time and I liked how it was affecting the mood and the reading of the pictures. It seemed to suit the fish and appear as if they might have musical tastes. It might also be as if they were in the plop shop buying hats and this was what was on in the background. But yes, I enjoy making music and soundtracks to things.

PL: Photography is prevalent in this show, but you work across all sorts of media, from painting and video to ceramics. Do you see much distinction between them? Is one more important or useful to you than the others, or it is about what suits the communication of a particular idea?

AM: To be honest I think it's useful so you don't get bored and so you feel as if you're not banging out the same old thing, which I am slightly paranoid about. I always like seeing artists who can dash between things and keep it exciting and also it means you can really obsess about one thing and then give it some space while you dabble in something

else. At art school I think they referred to this with a cooking reference. I don't think one is more important than the other though.

PL: You run a gallery project called Watch It with artist Sophie Michael from your house. And you have collaborated with Sophie on a series of video works. What does collaboration add to your process of making art? Does it make it more complicated or more straightforward?

AM: It depends who you are collaborating with. Working with Sophie is always fun and it means we can both use each other's strengths and patch up each other's weaknesses. I love all the work we have made together.

PL: Going back to the mention of nostalgia, do you think it can be dangerous, or is it a natural and possibly useful human trait?

AM: I often feel critical towards nostalgia and it is definitely very present these days, and in many ways that seems pernicious and frustrating. It certainly can be very dangerous in a political sense but I also think it can be very useful for creating ideas in a cultural sense. For example, electroclash made a new style of music from looking to the 80s, arts and crafts looked to the medieval period, and the Renaissance looked back to classical Greece and Rome. James Laver wrote something called Lavers Law which was a table of how we see the past in terms of fashion and taste. But it doesn't really hold up any more and I wonder why our nostalgia seems to be speeding up.

Perhaps it's a question of scale. Underground and stylistic movements are one thing but a nostalgification of a huge part of society is another, and perhaps this is exactly what is stopping us from creating new and positive visions to tackle the future. Also I wonder how much of this looking back is a very human thing to do and how much is a result of capitalism

and commodification. In essence, buying 60s spectacles isn't dangerous, but watching *Downton Abbey* possibly is. It's the narrative that's the problem. I do think though for some people, and in some ways, things were better in the past.

Reverse:

River Roding, 2015. C-type



Artist's presentation

Sunday 26 March, 3pm: A screening programme of rarely seen films by Munks, alongside collaborative work made with artist Sophie Michael. The videos feature day-trips to Art Deco villages, space ferrets living on an eco-planet, and a retro-loving poltergeist in the South Woodford area. Followed by informal drinks.

Andrew Munks (b. 1985, Rotherham) studied for his BA at the Slade School of Fine Art, UCL and graduated with an MA from the Royal College of Art in 2012. Munks co-runs Watch It gallery with artist Sophie Michael. Recent group shows include: *Depossession*, TG gallery, Nottingham, 2017; *Thirsty Garten*, Composing Rooms, Berlin, 2016; *Plural Melts*, Yvonne Lambert, Berlin, 2016; *Lovely* (with Kevin Green), programmed by Store Projects as part of *Taste*, RIBA, London, 2015; *C~C*, Late at Tate, Tate St Ives, 2015. Recent residencies and commissions include Troy Town Art Pottery Residency, London, 2016 and *Dearth*, with Richard Sides for Boiler Room, 2015.

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