

The projectile, unable to find its target, flies aimlessly through the streets of London like a heat-seeking missile in Antarctica. But this is clearly a cyclist's Go-Pro footage overlaid with an animated bullet, a reminder that in an age of fake news and increasing antagonism towards mainstream media, on-screen depictions are not always what they seem.

At times, 'Rumblestrip' itself seems to stray from the road, as demonstrated by the cryptic works of Paul Eastwood and Jessica Warboys. Eastwood's *Cafniad*, 2019, comprises two low plinths illuminated by white LEDs. On these are small, barefooted figures who sit, stand and lie alongside various fabric fragments. These curious tableaux are accompanied by a Welsh language voice-over, which deliberately excludes anyone unfamiliar with Eastwood's native tongue (although I later learned that the language is in fact an imagined Welsh from 600 years into the future). Nearby, Warboys's meandering video *Hill of Dreams*, 2016, follows a man as he wanders through the rolling hills and woods of Caerleon, South Wales. A Roman amphitheatre provides a backdrop for much of the film, which draws inspiration from Welsh author and mystic Arthur Machen's semi-autobiographical 1907 novel of the same name. As with Machen's lyrical tale, there are dreamy allusions to a pagan past and a preference for imagination over reality, but it is hard to pin down the relevance of this vivid imagery to the show's core thesis.

The exhibition is pulled back on course by Emanuel Almborg's potent film *The Nth Degree*, 2018, (Profile AM409), which explores the parallels between two historical flashpoints: the Welsh Rebecca Riots of 1839-43 and the London riots of 2011. These two events – respectively a peasant revolt against unjust taxation, and a spate of wanton violence, theft and destruction following the fatal shooting of Mark Duggan – are brought together in a theatre project developed by young people from Hackney in London and Mid Powys in Wales. Emerging from the mix of dynamic rehearsal sessions and cast interviews is a meditation on the common factors uniting these insurrections: social injustice, inequality, poverty, oppression, discrimination and marginalisation, enduring issues that if left unchecked still have the potential to catalyse violent ruptures. If anything, the social conditions that gave rise to the unrest of 2011 have continued unabated and, as with the strongest works in this show, Almborg's dramatics are an apt reminder that our age remains as precarious as ever. With so many policymakers seemingly asleep at the wheel, it is increasingly difficult to see how the mistakes of the past might be avoided in future. Indeed, the vehicle has been rattling for some time. ■

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Derek Boshier: It's Only When the Tide Goes Out ...

S Mark Gubb: The Last Judgement

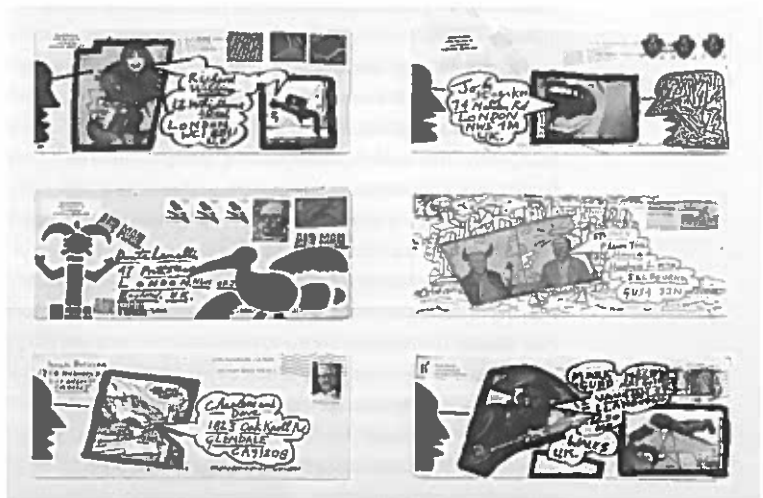
Oriel Mostyn Llandudno 16 March to 30 June

A little over ten years ago, in *The Death of Peter Fechter*, 2007, S Mark Gubb restaged the 1962 attempt of a teenager to cross the Berlin wall; shot by GDR guards as he tried to climb, Fechter slowly bled to death over the course of an hour, despite civilian protests and calls for help from both sides of the wall (Artnotes



S Mark Gubb
The Last Judgement
(*Saevus*) 2019

selection of envelopes personalised by Derek Boshier



AM309). Alighting on such a slow, indeterminate event for re-enactment made this a peculiar performance a work with much more beginning than end. The work's narrative complexities came to mind again with two new exhibitions. Gubb's 'The Last Judgement' and Derek Boshier's 'It's Only When the Tide Goes Out ...' form part of an in-conversation series in which two complementary artists exhibit alongside each other. The combination of Gubb with Boshier is particularly inspired because their links are both obvious and non-obvious. The most literal connections come from the artists' shared interest in music: Boshier famously collaborated with the likes of David Bowie and Joe Strummer of The Clash, while Gubb's work returns regularly to music, adopting the aesthetic of heavy metal or using objects such as guitar plenums.

A deeper link is the artists' direct responsiveness to the contemporary moment, something Boshier has been doing since at least 1962 when Ken Russell's film *Pop Goes the Easel* captured Boshier's acute awareness of what were then new trends of consumerism. The work in the exhibitions covers almost 50 years of social and political change and combines this with a strong sense of the now, with iPhones here, Kellyanne Conway there. But this urgency is curiously reminiscent of *The Death of Peter Fechter*, particularly given the exhibitions' eschatological titles and their promise of resolution. Much of the content in these exhibitions relates to things that have begun but whose outcome is uncertain. So while the grimness of the contemporary political, economic and environmental landscape is as obvious as machine-gun fire, what follows is the absence of action and uncertainty about

when exactly the lights go out. Gubb's biblical title and Boshier's reference to Warren Buffet's maxim ('it's only when the tide goes out that you see who has been swimming naked') suggest that in these exhibitions both artists dream of a reckoning.

These incomplete narratives come with mixed chronologies too, the artists often locating crises in longer time frames. Two sculptures by Gubb mimic antiquity visually – they are carved from limestone, one of them with an abrupt edge of a found fragment. But what formally looks old in one case shows the contortions of a turtle whose shell has grown around plastic six-pack rings. The image is from 1993, and has since flooded the internet. The image grows ever more contemporary with the advancing environmental catastrophe, despite being more than quarter of a century old. Formally, there are neat echoes in the work between the duration of the carving process and the slow growth of a turtle shell. Gubb's sculptures also incorporate plinths made from oil cans painted to look like marble; the plastic blighting the turtle comes from hydrocarbons, and so does the plinth.

Despite these generally dispiriting subjects there is also levity to the exhibitions, the work often suggesting the possibility of alternative narratives. Boshier's large tapestry *America*, 2018, shows two heads in profile looking at each other. The tapestry is full of games, among them two references to the NRA. The acronym is now identified so heavily with the National Rifle Association that its other use for the National Recovery Administration is largely forgotten. Here it is clearly demarcated with the Recovery Administration's collectivist 'We Do Our Part' slogan. The National Recovery Administration was one of FDR's New Deal agencies in the 1930s: by placing an extremely progressive interpretation of the acronym NRA beside its better-known regressive usage, Boshier gives hope about the mutability of today's NRA, incorporating that exchange within a timely manifesto for communication.

Even Boshier's most contemporary work carries with it this kind of historical awareness; just as Gubb's carved turtle comes from a 1993 image, Boshier's exhibition title draws from a maxim which principally circulated over a decade ago, during the 2008 financial implosion. His 'Otherwise Engaged' series is about distraction and the image, giving one account for why, when the tide did go out, nobody cared what it revealed. The layers of time in Boshier's work are amplified by the range of the work shown, which includes some of his most visually laconic work from the 1970s. *New York and King George V Avenue Cardiff*, both 1970, show black and red shapes or lines printed onto Perspex boxes over black-and-white images: one a 3D map of Manhattan, the other a tree-lined street receding into the distance. The forms relate to sculptures Boshier showed at the Hayward Gallery, so the works hover mid-metamorphosis between two and three dimensions, or design and actuality, a correspondence already staged by the visual echoes within the

Cory Arcangel
'BACK OFF'
installation view



work, the abstract shapes roughly corresponding to forms in the found images. *New York* and *King George V Avenue Cardiff* reinforce Guy Brett's notion that Boshier's preoccupations are closer to those of the Independent Group (from which Pop Art sprang) than to those of Pop Art itself. Boshier's is a magnificently complete integration of art with life – the exhibition includes shelves of Boshier's VHS collection, their spines all drawn and decorated with leitmotifs from each film, and examples of his painted and collaged envelopes posted to correspondents across the globe. These once-dispatched envelopes take on curious boomerang-like properties when collected back together like this. Similarly, the near-obsolence of the VHS format becomes a poetic postscript to Boshier's already poetic exercise in the personalisation of movies which mostly come from the studio system. Pairing artists' work like this risks encouraging a frivolous search for similarities and differences between their practices, but at Mostyn there is a real conversation between the exhibitions. In the end (to adopt the eschatology both artists suggest), each artist's work illuminates the other's in fascinating and unexpected ways. ■

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Cory Arcangel: BACK OFF

Firstsite Colchester 4 May to 7 July

Neither a retrospective nor a presentation of new work, Cory Arcangel's exhibition at Firstsite congregates various artworks produced since 2005. Although formally heterogeneous, culturally the works are linked through an overall engagement with US culture. What, then, are we to make of this amalgamation of works in an East Anglian gallery? This need not be a parochial question; indeed, it spotlights important characteristics of Arcangel's practice.

One answer involves examining Arcangel's exhibition via its strategies of infiltration and standardisation. Take the work *PSK*, 2014, for example, consisting of a 1984 Roland TR-909 drum machine that he has programmed to loop a rhythm track from Schooly D's 'P.S.K. What Does it Mean?'. Given plentiful gallery space, the drum machine is semi-isolated and visually readily locatable, although the drumbeat issuing from the machine via large speakers resonates throughout the entire exhibition. The piece refuses to serve as a backdrop and instead infiltrates the other works. Nearby is a television screen showing footage of Jimi Hendrix's legendary rendition of 'The Star-Spangled Banner' at Woodstock. Hendrix's playing, though, has been supplanted by Apple's GarageBand software's auto-tune function. While these are separate works, produced seven years apart, in this exhibition they conjoin. Just as the drumbeat underpins Hendrix's displaced guitarwork, his auto-tuned guitar overlays the drum machine. They infiltrate one another and in unison they become the soundtrack for everything else in the show.

Music inescapably saturates the exhibition and thereby functions as a connecting bond between the works. It also standardises the variety of works so that they cooperate as an exhibition. Standardisation is not limited to curation, however, because it is a key theme in much of the work on display. *Let*, 2019, for example, is a new body of work that consists of brightly lit estate agent noticeboards displaying branded napkins from chain restaurants and coffee shops (Wagamama, Café Nero etc). Real estate, with its circulation of wealth, becomes interconnected with gentrification; local identity is displaced by national and