

Mumbo Jumbo

I'm writing this from the airport and thinking about something that always comes to mind when I'm travelling. It's a passage from Bruce Chatwin's *Songlines* – a book which was borrowed and which I have now loaned to someone else, so please excuse the paraphrasing. The anecdote goes something like this: Two African guides were leading a white explorer through the bush at a fast pace for days when suddenly they stopped and sat down on a rock. Refusing to move, they said that they had been travelling too fast for too long and, in spite of the financial incentives offered by the explorer, must now wait for their souls to catch up.

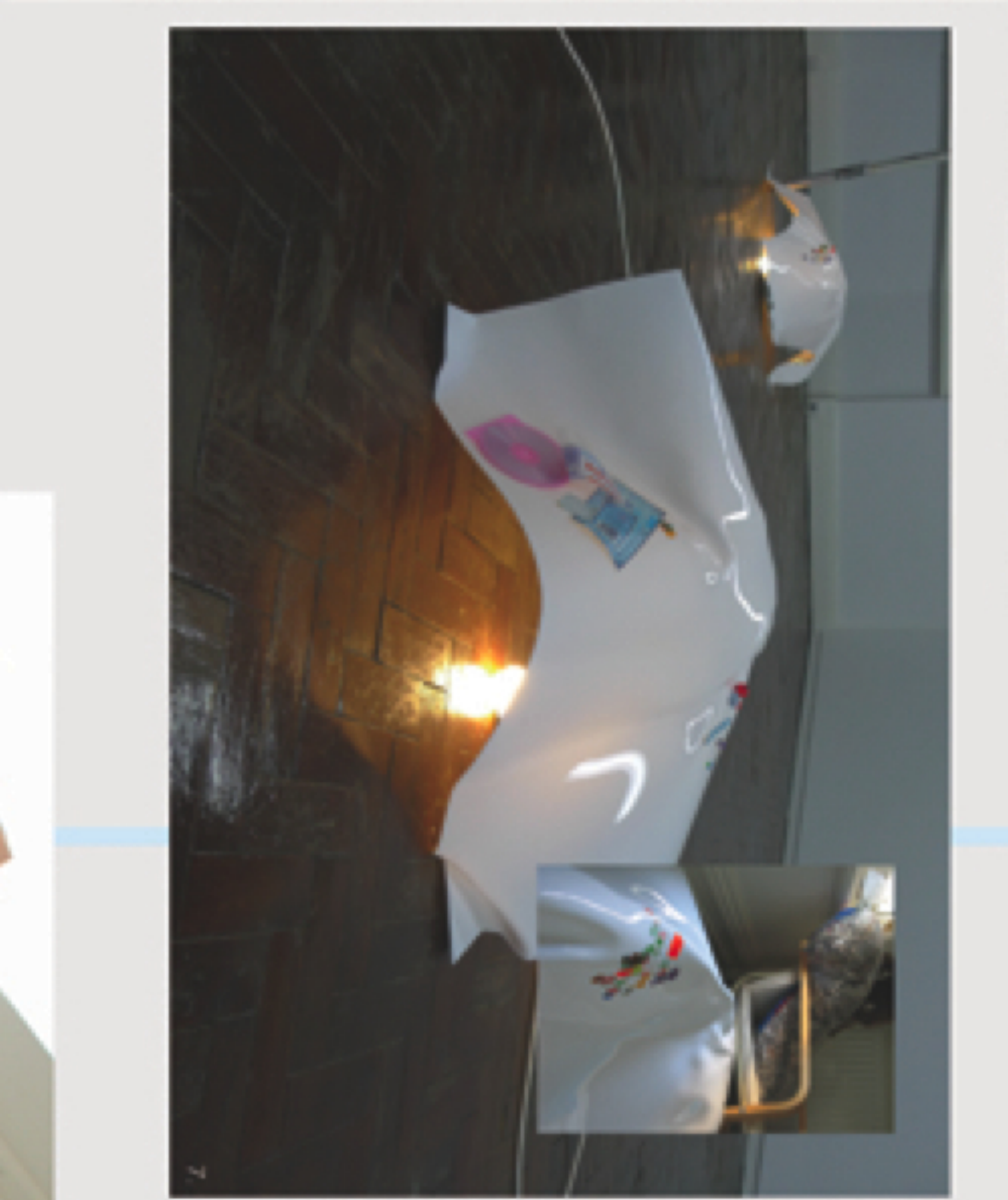
We are constantly faced with a similar disconnection between our environment and ourselves: to the objects, and perhaps, to the attitudes of the people within it. This disconnect is often difficult to identify, and even more difficult to act upon — time to think has now also become a luxury.

The other resonating element of this story is the passive rebellion of the guides, the 'quiet reaction' filled with the unshakable resolve of ancient knowledge. Or perhaps it's just intuition: that connection between the body, mind and soul that is so easily dismissed as mere-age 'mumbo-jumbo'.

Not all that many, including myself, now stand facing the problems and patterns of global capitalism like mankind once stood before a thunderstorm, confused, frightened and feeling partially responsible. But this undefined responsibility is still important; it fills us with enthusiasm, informs our actions and heightens the intensity of our thoughts. We must look the eye of the storm in the eye.

Too Much Of Everything (TMOE), curated by ffixXed, has been organised to showcase a variety of responses to our roles within cycles of production and consumption. This exhibition provides both the artists and the audience a rock to sit on, to establish an open discourse, and to create activity that injects something vital back into the act of productivity.

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1. BLESS, Shop #20, New York, 2008.
- 2, 3, 4, 5. BLESS, Shop #19 Mexico, 2008.
6. BLESS/Advanced RIXXed, Shopperbag One, 2009.
7. James Deutscher, Kuramata Wannabe One, 2009.
8. fabrics interseason, dobling reform: modern veldt, 2007.
9. fabrics interseason, dominant design, 2008.
10. Christopher LG Hill, You Can't Steal a Gift, 2008.
11. Liv Barrett & Matt Hinkley, Poster 2009
- 12 & 13. Pat Foster & Jen Barrett, Untitled from the series The Doing and Undoing of Things 2009.
14. Rob McKenzie, Political Jumper, 2004.
15. Heinz Peter Knes, 103, 2007.



16. Heinz Peter Knes, Untitled, 2009.
18. Liv Barrett, Water Image, 2009
19. Sibling, Y3K Door 002, 2009.
19. Heinz Peter Knes, Untitled, 2009.
20. Emmeline de Mooij, Strip it down baby, give me those bare necessities 2009.
21. Emmeline de Mooij, Untitled 2006.
22. BLESS, Shop #19 Mexico, 2008.
23. RIXXed, RIXXed Rug, 2008.
24. Slow and Steady Wins the Race, No 11. New Bags
25. RIXXed, Rug w/ Sleeves, 2009.



ffixXed's own practice, like many of the artists invited to participate in this exhibition, is not designed to be defined. However this innate resistance of definition about being confusing or obscure, it's simply about a willingness to explore contradictory impulses, to slow things down, to attempt to appreciate desire and its productive force.



In the 2008 show *You Can't Steal A Gift*, Christopher LG Hill explored what happens when the product is a gift, either given or found, and its market value is essentially dismissed. His TMOE contribution, 'temporary colour/pattern dissolve, step beyond geometry', which will also function as a dressing room in Y3K's shop. Follows on by exploring that moment between the ownership and non-ownership of material which occurs in this curious space.



In linguistics, 'productivity' is a major defining characteristic of human language. It refers to the creative capacity of language-users to produce and understand an infinite number of sentences using a finite set of grammatical rules. In this respect, human language is often contrasted with the extremely limited range of signals that constitute the communication systems of animals.¹

Consumer choices are seemingly infinite, and there are obvious similarities here between human language and broader culture. But, what emerges if, like animals, we choose to work with a more limited range of signals? More precisely, what happens when we embrace limitations (that we are subjected to or that we subject ourselves to) via the recycling and representing of materials, as well as the reinterpretation of existing objects?

The first piece exhibited as part of TMOE is the front entrance to the new Y3K Gallery. Developed by Sibling — a collective of eight designers with backgrounds in visual communication, landscape urbanism and architecture — the brief restricted any alterations to the external facing surface of the door². As a response, the door has been placed upon a central pivot, with the interior surface transformed and allowed to rotate and function as the street frontage when desired. Reminiscent of the transparent turnstile doors of shopping centres, etcetera — the ones that somehow manage to simultaneously slow you down and speed you up — this design combines transience and permanence to heighten the sense of coming and going in both the long term³ and short term. Our choices as visitors are also emphasised through this design in that the gallery is able to control whether the visitor is welcomed by a large opening, or if a more complex negotiation is required to enter the space.

An obstacle course-cum-sanctuary, TMOE contains a genuine desire to encourage negotiation, interaction, and even meditation upon objects and ideas. The show includes the work of BLESS, Berlin-based designers whose 'Mirror Curtain' is an excellent example of the dual functionality which has become their trademark — trademark being a peculiar word in this context. They proclaim that their design does not exist without interaction — what is the sound of one hand shopping? — and state a love for the user. This notion that every second someone spends doing something is a second they can't spend doing something else is more than just an idea, it's a responsibility⁴ and, although this respect for the user/consumer is so fundamental to good design, this 'opportunity cost' is rarely acknowledged or articulated.

Through the various works exhibited we become conscious of systems, habits, feelings: Olivia Barrett's scattered glasses of water remind us of wastage and awareness via the David Foster Wallace story of two young fish⁵; Heinz Peter Knes' work, 'Cutting Photos', 2009, manually slices photographs to highlight analogue photography's disappearance into the gaps of the digital world⁶; Dutch-artist Emmeline de Mooij, via a variety of methods, gets closer to nature and the earth's cycles of production and consumption: daily life, disease, death. James Deutscher forges an object of his obsession, re-making a Shiro Kuramata glass chair from Perspex and exploring the idea that the love of what an object stands for and how it is realised, is not necessarily one and the same; Rob McKenzie digs up a printed logo sweater of a marijuana leaf — a herbal concoction too potent to delve into here; and Matt Hinkley (in collaboration with Barrett) produces printed matter and re-directs existing information by using the most basic, yet underrated, tools⁷.

Questions of value are also explored by New York fashion label *Slow And Steady Wins The Race*, who release their luxury products as 'issues' rather than ranges and limit them to a quantity of 100 while keeping their prices affordable. These experiments in value are often fascinating in the way they shift responsibility from producer to consumer by reducing or eliminating the financial veil that can prevent the ability to see something for what it actually is. In a more internal exploration of value — fabrics interseason create woven rugs, carpets and tapestries using the left over fabrics from their collections dating 1998–2006. Oversized and with multiple surfaces, these gestures assume a life of their own, seeming to gather momentum as they are fed and threaded with leftovers.

Economy refers to resources and the management of these resources. A good economy is associated with efficiency — the ability to do more with less — but, whether personally or professionally, more often than not it is simply about doing more. Perhaps it is easy to forget that efficiency should be about finding a balance and it takes 'inefficient' objects, rituals and approaches such as craft and DIY techniques to emphasise the importance of our actions as producers and our choices as consumers.

As I arrive home, my neighbour, Don, is polishing his shoes and asks if I have anything for the 'Sunday Shoe Shine'. He tells me that he's had one of these pairs of shoes for 40 years now. I am amazed by this fact but confess I don't have any shoes that can be polished and am instantly saddened by this realisation. Perhaps I've always viewed this kind of commitment to belongings as a choice, but in that moment, and in anticipation of this exhibition, it becomes so much more. A ffixXed state so simply — look after your clothes...

By Chris Barton, 2009

1 www.slowandsteadyyinthefair.com/1 ABOUT
2 Mumbo Jumbo, or mumbojumbo, is an English phrase or expression that denotes a confusing or nonsensical subject. It was coined during the time when Great Britain was colonising areas of the Americas and it is said to have been derived from the word 'mumbo' which seemed to the foreigners to be mysterious and puzzling rituals. See: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mumbo_Jumbo_\(phrase\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mumbo_Jumbo_(phrase))
3 How Language Works, David Crystal, Penguin Books, 2006
4 'Any changes to the exterior would have involved even planning approval, a process that is still in place today. This is the time to deal with. Hence the solution asked for something that did not alter the character of the building and the way it was begun.' [Taken from email correspondence between Alan Day (Officer, Greater London Council) and Olivia Barrett & Jen Barrett]
5 Pat Foster and Jen Barrett's contribution to this exhibition will also have a digital work gallery space, which will be the develop a solution for an office working desk and a clothes rack for the more quiet side of the collection.
6 Two young fish encounter an older fish who asks them how their day is, how is the water? When the older fish responds, the young fish look at each other, confused, and then say, 'What the fuck is water?' [Taken from email correspondence between Olivia Barrett and ffixXed]
7 '100-1000', Essays from a Telephone Conversation Between Wolfgang Tillmans and Peter Dinklage, 2009, Issue 04, Summer 2009/09
8 'It's only natural. Most of our early experiences in dealing with an information system involve the use of a single material we become familiar with at school, home and work, even when the material is not the same. It's only natural that we would use this stuff as art material?' B's ubiquitous, iconic, white, 'cutting photos' machine, which would artists use this stuff as art material? B's ubiquitous, iconic, white, 'cutting photos' machine, which would artists use this stuff as art material? B's ubiquitous, iconic, white, 'cutting photos' machine, which would artists use this stuff as art material? B's ubiquitous, iconic, white, 'cutting photos' machine, which would artists use this stuff as art material? B's ubiquitous, iconic, white, 'cutting photos' machine, which would artists use this stuff as art material? B's ubiquitous, iconic, white, 'cutting photos' machine, which would artists use this stuff as art material? B's ubiquitous, iconic, white, 'cutting photos' machine, which would artists use this stuff as art material? B's ubiquitous, iconic, white, 'cutting photos' machine, which would artists use this stuff as art material? B's ubiquitous, iconic, white, 'cutting photos' machine, which would artists use this stuff as art material? B's ubiquitous, iconic, white, 'cutting photos' machine, which would artists use this stuff as art material? B's ubiquitous, iconic, white, 'cutting photos' machine, which would artists use this stuff as art material? B's ubiquitous, iconic, white, 'cutting photos' machine, which would artists use this stuff as art material? B's ubiquitous, iconically published in NEWB exhibition catalogue, published by the Department of Contemporary Art, 2008.

