

... to see what condition my condition was in ...

In 2011 the curator of contemporary photography Matthew Thompson described our age's visual culture as a condition in which 'Appropriation has ceased to have a critical function or reading in and of itself. It is a given, a condition many young artists were born into (or after)' (Matthew Thompson, 'The Object Lost and Found.' catalogue essay for *The Anxiety of Photography*. Aspen Art Museum, 2011). 'Peers', as McGlynn's chosen title for his 2019 project at the Artink Fort Dunree galleries, can here usefully serve to indicate the gloriously limitless capacity for reflexivity within this contemporary condition, with the word 'peer' defining and situating the artist, the art and the audience as all *mutually* constitutive of a contemporary visual culture, rather than the artist, at one remove, making art as any form of subjective or exterior study.

Within this argument, we can then see in McGlynn's work *Cascade*, 2019 (MDF, softwood & paint. H 260 x W 31 x D 3 cm) the tumble (and the Tumblr) of words materialized and commoditized as image, and reflexive of our own substitution of the photographic or digital image/gif/emoticon for any communication with word and language as an expressive tool, within our contemporary condition in which 'All photographic imagery circulating on the Internet is the raw material for millions of "unique" stories of (educators, hold your breath) "self-expression": found illustrations that quasi-communicate millions of people's homogenized experiences and emotions' (Charlotte Cotton, *Nine Years, A Million Conceptual Miles*, Aperture.org, 2013).

A glorious phrase that by Charlotte Cotton, a prominent photography curator, 'found illustrations that quasi-communicate millions of people's homogenized experiences and emotions'; a phrase which McGlynn makes material and manifest in *Pedalo*, (2019) (faux fur, steel, softwood, inkjet print on backlit photo film, plate glass, light fittings), and in *Here/There*, (2019) (photograph on vinyl installation), both images of real-life scenes made look miniature, almost as if we are looking at a diorama, with real objects and real people that look now like fake miniatures and replicas. These works display a resemblance, though not an actual execution, of the technique called

tilt-shift, a stylistic device used widely across photography and moving-image that make a scene seem almost as if you are looking at a model set or toytown. Tilt-shift is a visual trope that brings a complex subjectivity/objectivity to us as peers/viewers of a scene. Because the tilt-shift image depicts its scene as apparently less human, apparently more fake, apparently constructed of miniature replicas and toy-town figures, it removes the sense of subjective agency from anyone featured in the image. If represented as toy-town figurines in a toy-town scene, we imagine the individuals or objects displayed as no more than automata in a machine, as figures that we can lift, possess, control and re-situate at will. As found figures we can resituate and re-imagine, quasi-communicating millions of people's homogenized experiences and emotions, to paraphrase Cotton.

Pedalo (2019) features at its centre the image of two figures on a pedalo upon the Mediterranean sea. This is in fact a found image/object seen under extreme close-up in a macro lens, so its effect resembles that of a tilt-shift image. In our contemporary condition that Charlotte Cotton describes as an 'intellectual-property amnesia of the age of the "digital native"' it can still seem exciting to locate this extreme close-up cropping of the image of the pedalo figures from its original found image/object, which was the kitsch cover of a 1970s LP of Costa-del Sol favourites - with the package-holiday classic of the first Spanish recording of Y Viva Espana appearing on disc for the first time - the heyday of the package holiday and its pre-packaged identity for the traveller's joy, fun and contentment.

With its technicolour blue sea background as false and lurid as a John Hinde sunset, McGlynn's Pedalo (2019) captures all the commodity allure of package tourist imagery. In some respects, the effect - and the effect of tilt-shift in general - also resembles the power of what in advertising is called the packshot photograph, in which a close-up picture of the advertised product in its packaging, the object, the commodity is removed from its context, put against an abstracted background, and in our attempt at reading the image in the face of this contrast of focus and abstraction the seductive force of the commodity is accentuated. This of course is where we all are

situated as image consumers in this contemporary, and as the makers of mutually appropriated images, as the makers of mutually constitutive realities.

A similar affect can occur in the work of a photo-collage, where rather than against an abstracted background, images of central figures are re-situated in a composite image, as a constructed unity of diverse elements. This act of reconfiguration generates its own agency, its own meanings and it can in turn also foreground, exaggerate or manipulate the agency for each originary element that together make up the new composite image. In an ingenious twist, McGlynn's work *Here/There* (2019) demonstrates something of the technique of the 'expanded collage aesthetic' which is further indicated by photography curator Matthew Thompson as indicative of our age's visual culture. In its 'expanded collage aesthetic' *Here/There* (2019) collapses within a single work the image manipulations of collage and tilt-shift with the dramatic exclusivity and uniqueness of site-specificity. *Here/There* (2019) displays another apparent tilt-shift effect image of a Mediterranean package-holiday beach scene as a window vinyl across one half of a window in the Donegal tourist site of Fort Dunree, facing onto a small rocky outcrop immediately outside the window, with the peak of a north Donegal rocky formation matching the distant peaks of a horizon line of the blue Mediterranean.

A referent to the ubiquity of such image-filters - and it is telling that our contemporary sees a visual literacy with a readiness and expertise in the image-filter, the reality-filter, apparent now from childhood onwards (whose child has not Instagrammed or Tik-Tok-ed and shared online an instant of their lives) - is further materialized and made manifest in McGlynn's *In/out*, 2019, (bamboo door curtains installation). Strategically situated at the entrance to the main Artink Fort Dunree gallery, the bamboo curtain situates a visual threshold which we must make a subjective choice to pass through, although a choice in the context where passing through this threshold, this visual filter of a bamboo curtain, is essential to our participation in and our appreciation of the exhibition. A threshold not carrying a threat or a demand, no abandon-hope-all-ye-who-enter here. More the allure of an apparent play of colour - visible pastel-pink words, blue of the sea, tan of the sand

the skin - and the allure of the phrase in McGlynn's wall text, Come What May, June, July., 2019 (Vinyl text installation on wall. H 30 x W 450 cm) and in Summer Reigns, 2019 (silkscreen print on cotton t-shirt). Are 'Come What May, June, July' and 'Summer Reigns' an observation or a demand? Regardless, they each carry the irresistible immediacy of our participation in our mutually constitutive realities, our mutually appropriated images, our contemporary, that McGlynn engages across the Peers project.

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