DARREN LAGO
Empire

4 April - 3 May 2013

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Monday - Friday 10 - 6   Saturday 11 - 5
Empire
The word *Empire* brings to mind, former, coming to an end, exploitation, violence, the taking of resources, a grandeur of purpose and a belief in a common aim.

**AO**

AO are the letters proceeding BP, they are also common blood types, blood for oil. We are all involved in the blood spilt in securing oil. Every time we lift the pump nozzle a trigger is pulled and another bullet fired and an innocent falls on foreign soil. The tap pours and I try to wash my hands in a system which I know to be wrong. Maybe I can wash away my distain and believe. It is the way things are meant to be.

**LPH**

Vain aspiration stands reflected in the dark pool. To relieve ourselves we drill holes in our mother and fill our cups until they overflow. And yet the thirst is never quenched; the earth and those without mouths always cover the tab.

**Inside-out**

The crisp white invitation to a life without toil, it hangs over a chair beneath which the pale carpet lies sodden. As the salesman dresses for his next deal a moment of doubt and panic gushes within, “am I doing the right thing, will it be better”. Top bottom done, neck tie pulled tight, straighten jacket, just keep it to yourself. As the door self closes the room is as empty as the vessel.

Darren Lago 2013
Inside-out / wake  2013
resin, plywood, steel, carpet, plastic hose, battery, water
dye, white shirts
115 x diameter 150 cm
left: Sit 2013
resin on plywood
123 x 149.5 x 92.5 cm

right: Rise 2013
resin on plywood
231 x 76.5 x 53 cm
foreground: **Yield**  2013  
resin on plywood  
123 x 149.5 x 93 cm  

background: **Rest**  2013  
resin on plywood  
29 x 205.5 x 92 cm
315 LPH  2013
acrylic mirror, steel, plywood, pump, float level device, battery, plastic piping
219.5 x 99 x 41 cm
AO  2013
digital film, edition of 8
running time: 02:40 m

left: Rise  2013  231 x 76.5 x 53 cm
right: Fall  2013  230.5 x 76.5 x 53 cm
both resin on plywood
Productivism
In his ‘Productivist’ works Lago juxtaposes and fuses every day objects into single pieces. Iconic design is spliced to make art, and art is dissected to unsettle its seriousness.

A hoover is transformed into a urinal; the artist recounted how on seeing a display of vacuum cleaners in a department store he was immediately reminded of a row of urinals, the obvious allusion to Duchamp was a bi-product.
Happy Shopper  2004
spray painted glass reinforced plastic and bicycle
117 x 152 x 57 cm
Electrolux Guitar 2006
vacuum cleaner and electric guitar
112 x 32 x 32 cm
Sweeper 2006
Football boot with brush
23.5 x 30 x 10 cm
**Fountain** 2000
plastic and stainless steel
153 x 111 x 40.5 cm (includes stand)
Tommy Can 1999
metal, plastic, wood
30 x 80 x 18 cm
Kenwood Meringue 1998
plastic and metal
23 x 29 x 11 cm
Falling Light 2001
cast aluminium, lamp post
403 x 91.5 x 152.5 cm
Leaning Urn of Argo 'Cafe Ole' 1995
polished aluminium, steel and plastic
85 cm
Braun Banister 1996
pine banister with a braun blender part
96 x 7 x 7 cm
Translation
I like the idea of playing with any feelings of complacency that the viewer may have about the territory of the work; to confound; to place the viewer between a mutant, mad, bad Mickey Mouse and a minimalist conceptual work. Through the treatment of the work I pay attention to positioning the viewer intellectually or physiologically.

Darren Lago 2006

The revolving mirrors of Large Glass contain undetected motion and yet as the viewer passes by the open structure displaying their drive mechanisms, it is plain to see that they are quietly turning. It is at this point the viewer asks “Why?”. It is a purely conceptual notion. Here, visible to all, is the idea manifest; a mirror is attached to a motor that exists purely to rotate the mirror, but once the mirror is viewed the object appears unchanged. The five objects disappear into their surroundings, their context: the work reflects the space, its environment, without depiction, reference or symbol. It brings nothing of the artist’s subjective interpretation; it is only what the viewer sees. At this point, however, the work becomes flawed in its concept; the inaccuracy of the mirror’s surface causes the image in the mirror to ripple, to distort during its rotation. Perfection in concept or construction is not possible and so the mirror’s most engaging attribute is its flaw; imperfect circles.
Large Glass 2006
mirror, steel and electrical motors, 5 parts
each: 175 x 183 x 155 cm
Collar. Felt 2005
felt
6.2 x 15.5 x 18 cm
White Collar. Felt 2005
felt
6.2 x 15.5 x 18 cm
Out-sideboard 2009
GRP, wood and outboard motor
107 x 230 x 64 cm
Belle 2006
wood, steel, fibreglass and electrical motor
240 x 155 x 185 cm
Electric Chair 2003
chair and electric light bulbs
90 x 61 x 61 cm
Appropriation
Darren Lago’s passion for design and modernism allows him to take a humorous peek at these two areas without sliding into cynicism. Antique Lego is used to render Mondrian into a tight plastic plane, but the distressed nature of the old and abused plastic blocks are in keeping with the now aged Mondrians that we see in museums, whereas the battered meccano used to construct the mini Judd interpretations highlight the differences; it reminds us of Judd’s engineering in his sculptures, underlining how resolutely clean cut his sculptures are.
‘Working Vans’ after John’s ‘ale cans’ 2010
Oil paint on cast bronze
15.5 x 34 x 34 cm
Composition, Lago Mondrian 2007
colour plastic bricks
19 x 19 x 3.3 cm
New York City III 2007
coloured plastic blocks (yellow)
32.2 x 30.3 x 3.2
Mini Matta ‘Splitting’ 2007
plywood, metal, card paint
39.5 x 38.5 x 24 cm
Fuzzy Frank ‘Hawks Point’ 2007
felt on board
78 x 78 cm
Fuzzy Frank ‘Mylor’ 2007
felt on board
78 x 78 cm
Untitled 2 2007
painted meccano
94 x 6.5 x 6.5 cm
Untitled 3 2007
painted meccano
94 x 6.5 x 6.5 cm
Iconoclasm
Rodin’s bombastic Balzac morphs into Mickey Mouse. Lago made his copy of Balzac in resin, it towers over the viewer nearly 9 feet tall, cocking its mousey nose in the air while an enormous clown like foot pokes out from under the robes. Lago’s recurring use of Mickey Mouse can be seen as reflecting his love for cut and pasting the two ends of the cultural spectrum, but also a comment upon America. American influence upon the old world culture, the manifest creep of its vernacular into other cultures, reflected in this French sculpture’s futile attempt to resist the inevitable? Racked behind the Balzac are smaller, multiples made from china clay, like souvenirs lining the shelves of any Parisian tourist shop.
Mickey de Balzac (grand) 2009-2011
self-coloured cast glass reinforced plastic
284 x 135 x 97 cm
'Mickey de Balzac' Petit Noir 2012
self coloured resin
68 x 40 x 30 cm
Mickey de Balzac (petit) 2011
slip cast glazed ceramic, edition of 12
71.5 x 38 x 22 cm
Candy Press
In 1847, the invention of the candy press (also known as a toy machine) made it possible to produce multiple shapes and sizes of candy at once. In his series of ‘Candy’ works Lago uses a mold to make a sweetie gun. These M16’s were designed to be made in the same manner; guns mass manufactured in plastic, pressed from moulds. Assault weapons that were cheap and easy to manufacture, something to rival the success of the AK47. Lago’s candy sculptures are alluring, desirably sugary, we want to take a bite and all the implied allusions; from sticking the barrel in to your mouth, to the allure of the gun and the excessive consumption of sugar. One way or another its going to kill you. In the first ‘gun’ works Lago used cereal boxes pressed into moulds to make his ‘Cereal Killer’ series, again taking everyday iconic images of art and design and merging them into objects both comforting and unsettling.
Coco Pop 2011
reformed cereal packets
13 x 18 x 5 cm
Rhubarb Bomb 2012
resin and glass
26 x 92 x 6.5 cm
Mandarin Chew 2012
resin and glass
26 x 92 x 6.5 cm
M&M16 ‘composition more orange than blue’ 2011
cast resin and enamel with metal stand
25 x 92 x 8 cm, (38 x 92 x 24cm incl stand)
Cola Colt | 2011

tinted resin and glass

13.6 x 25.5 x 4 cm
Candy Colts ‘Lemon Fizz’ 2012
tinted resin and glass granules
13.6 x 25.5 x 4 cm
BIOGRAPHY

1965  Born Walsall, Staffordshire
1984-85  Burton on Trent Art College
1985-88  BA Fine Art, Portsmouth Polytechnic
1989-90  MA Fine Art, Chelsea School of Art
1990  Awarded the Picker Fellowship, Kingston Polytechnic
1991  Awarded the Boise Scholarship, Slade School of Fine Art

Lives and works in Cornwall

One-Person Exhibitions

1987  Mountbatten Gallery, Portsmouth
       Sculptural Furniture, Architectural School, Portsmouth
1992  Annely Juda Fine Art, London (with Werner Haypeter and Gloria Friedmann)
1993  Mass, Walsall Museum and Art Gallery
1996  Productivism, Annely Juda Fine Art, London,
       How Long is a Piece of String? Half as Long as the Parthenon, Last Orders, London
       Seagate Gallery, Dundee
1997  Forms of Production, Basle Art Fair
1998  Haus Bill, Zumikon, Switzerland
1999  Lago Rosso, 1000 Eventi, Milan
2000  7 x 5 Sculptures, Annely Juda Fine Art, London
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<th>Year</th>
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| 2001 | *Darren Lago & Co.*, The New Art Gallery, Walsall  
*Radiant City*, Hertfordshire University, Hertfordshire  
*Berwin Leighton*, Adelaide House, London |
| 2006 | *Imperfect Circle*, Annely Juda Fine Art, London |
| 2007 | *Inappropriations*, Davidson Contemporary, New York |
| 2012 | *Sugar*, Davidson Contemporary, New York |
| 2013 | *Empire*, Annely Juda Fine Art, London |

**Group Exhibitions**

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<td>1986</td>
<td><em>Art in the South</em>, Television Programme and Exhibition, Barbican Art Gallery, London</td>
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| 1990 | *Art 90*, Stockwell Depot Summer Show, London  
| 1991 | *Louder than Words*, Corner House, Manchester  
*Picker Fellowship Exhibition*, Kingston Polytechnic Gallery, Surrey |
| 1993 | *Urban Hybrid*, Bath Museum, Bath |
*Half Life*, Seagate Gallery, London  

1997  *In Transit, In Residence*, Stanley Picker Gallery, Kingston

1998/9  *Fun de Siècle*, Walsall Museum and Art Gallery, then to: Middlesbrough Art Gallery

1999  *In The Midst of Things*, Bourneville, Birmingham
*Saatchi in Sheffield*, Mappin Art Gallery, Sheffield
*Simulacra: Keeping it Real*, Mead Gallery, Warwick

2001  *Room with a View*, Carlisle City Council Arts Unit
*Home*, Gimpel Fils, London
*Mednarodni Trienale male Plastike 2001*, Gallery of Murska Sobota, Slovenia
*The (Ideal) Home Show*, Gimpel Fils, London
*Base Metal*, gf2, London

2002  *Shoe*, The City Gallery, Leicester
Galerie Konstruktiv Tendens, Stockholm, Sweden

2003  *Shoe*, McManus Galleries, Dundee
Mansfield Museum and Art Gallery, Mansfield
The Park Gallery, Falkirk
The Gunnersbury Park Museum, London


2009  *Summer Show*, Davidson Contemporary, New York

2012  *Piet and Ida Sanders. A Life with Art*, Stedelijk Museum Schiedam, Netherlands
Acknowledgement:
Thanks to Patrick Ramsay for help on ‘AO’.

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