

# Our Period.

**Mathew Hale: Page 37 of MIRIAM DIVORCEE, 2007. Collage**  
**Susan Morris: Calendar/ Dot 2005, 2007. Wallpaper.**

Mathew Hale and Susan Morris present a kind of drawing. It occurs - is in fact produced by - in the *overlap* between the pieces they have chosen to show at Five Years, as well as, separately, in the work of each artist itself.

Yet how can we claim that this work, operating under the collective title *Our Period*, be categorised as drawing?

The question of what unites the work and ties it to drawing might hinge upon something else, which both artists share: an interest in involuntary thought as a methodology for generating work.

Roland Barthes has referred to that which can rupture an image, in an encounter both subjective yet self-obliterating, as 'an element that rises from the scene, shoots out of it like an arrow, and pierces' him. The images that operate in this way, he suggests, 'are in effect *punctuated*...'

Barthes equates the experience of looking at such images with that of reading a Haiku; both image and short poem are 'un-developable', 'irreducible'. 'In both cases', Barthes suggests, 'we might speak of an intense immobility *linked to a detail* (to a detonator)'; an 'explosion that makes a little star' upon the 'pane' of the text or image.

In the film *My Own Private Idaho*, the River Phoenix character (who also suffers from narcolepsy), has a recurrent flashback or memory. Or is it in fact just a fantasy scene, which repeatedly interrupts his thoughts, cuts him off, temporarily, from reality? Whatever; the scene or memory is represented as a house, having apparently fallen from the sky, crashing into a field; an event, never explained, which happens over and over again as the otherwise conventional filmic narrative runs its course.

Morris is interested in her own instances of 'falling houses'; the spontaneous occurrence of images that disrupt or contradict her carefully constructed sense of self. Having identified five particularly insistent 'prohibited' thoughts, and colour coded them, she tracked them over a period of one year. If she happened to have one of these thoughts she marked the day on which it fell by sticking a dot of the allocated colour onto a calendar.

In this way, the works become a kind of notation or score of these things; incidents, which the dots stand in for, that are always self-identical, can never be predicted, and remain insistently indecipherable: an afterimage or flashback; a sequence of familiar ideas (eternally re-run); the echo of a 'little phrase'. As vestiges of that which caused them, as *trace* or remainder of them, the constellations spontaneously formed by the dots falling into one group or another produce a kind of (automatic) drawing.

Barthes had an idea about a book he would have liked to write. In RB/RB he got as far as a suggested title and brief summary of contents: '*Incidents*: (mini-texts, one-liners, haiku, notations, puns, everything that falls, like a leaf).'

Drawing on a similar vocabulary, the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan gives us a commentary on painting. Writing about the artist Matisse, whose movements he has seen on film, Lacan suggests that what occurs 'as these strokes fall like rain from the painter's brush is not choice, but something else. Can we not try to formulate what this something else is?' He continues: 'If a bird were to paint, would it not be by letting fall its feathers, a snake by casting off its scales, a tree by letting fall its leaves?' Lacan suggests that the painter is producing marks unconsciously, governed perhaps, 'by remote control'. It is this that produces 'the hypnotic value of the painting.' In other words, Lacan compares this movement - the 'rain' from the painter's brush that occurs alongside other, more communicative, gestures - with that which is 'inhuman', with that which bypasses the culturally imposed symbolic system that organises and orders meaning. In this movement, something 'else' is being traced, marked or mapped out, something that falls, that comes from elsewhere.

Hale's activity of cutting up and arranging images, or of letting his pen wonder across a page, is terminated (brought to a close - the picture is finished or made) at the point at which things 'come together'. Something falls, like a shadow, into place. That something falls seems both inevitable and decisive yet the action never shrugs off its associations with that which is simultaneously accidental - a product of chance. (Note that for Barthes, that which 'punctuates' the image is a 'sting, speck, cut, little hole - and also a cast of the dice'.)

Morris and Hale's mixture of found and manipulated material produces and is pinned together with that which takes on the properties of a punctuation mark. This mark or place nevertheless does not fix or resolve anything. It is not a 'full' stop; because what it marks is both irreducible and evasive, it in fact generates a void.

What comes across is the idea of a drawing that comes from elsewhere, that is a-cultural (anti-social) or 'inhuman' (automatic); of drawing that, like rain or like a shadow, or like the echo of a remembered scene, indexes something that may not actually be present on the page but which nevertheless falls, as if by intention or design, across the compositional field.

**FIVE YEARS Unit 66 Regent Studios 8 Andrews Road London E8 4QN**

<http://www.fiveyears-unit66.blogspot.com>  
<http://www.fiveyears.org.uk>  
[info@fiveyears.org.uk](mailto:info@fiveyears.org.uk)