Contraption
2014
Wind chime tuned to the first bar of Master of the Universe with distortion unit, metal grille, ice hockey puck, fan, sound equipment
230 × 43 × 18 cm
In Bloom 1
2013
Plywood
200 × 200 × 220 cm
In Bloom 2
2013
Plywood
200 × 200 × 220 cm
When the Night Comes
2014
Metal grille
(Installation with paper, fan, sound equipment)
43 × 18 cm
Silver Flag
2014
Fabric
200 × 300 cm
In Bloom 3
2013
Plywood
200 × 200 × 220 cm
Major Gig
(Pastoral Romantic
As Is Sub Focus
Easy Rider In
Search of Space)
2014
Record covers,
motors, posters
309 × 250 × 9 cm
Detail from **Major Gig**: 
**Headline 2**  
2013  
Printed poster  
(Number 13 from a series of 18 posters. Unlimited edition made for *News from Nowhere*, 2013)  
70 × 50 cm
Detail from *Major Gig: The First and Always*  
2013  
Printed poster  
(Number 4 from a series of 18 posters. Unlimited edition made for *News from Nowhere*, 2013)  
50 × 70 cm
Configuration (Elements 1–7)
2014
Ink and watercolour on walls
Dimension variable
(Distributed throughout the gallery)
‘The Information’
Graham Gussin, Tom Morton
and Andrew Renton in conversation

Tom Morton
A good place to start might be In Bloom, three plywood sculptures that take their form from the truncated rhombohedron that features in Albrecht Dürer’s engraving Melencholia I (1514). Slightly bigger than a human being, these objects are (unlike Dürer’s geometric solid) open, penetrable, and might be imagined as the seed pods of some alien plant, or perhaps as the landing craft of a starship, beached on a strange world. Looking at them, I kept thinking of the set design of The Man Who Fell to Earth (1976), a film in which David Bowie plays what we might identify as a late 20th-century version of Melencholia I’s lugubrious, terra-bound, and markedly androgynous angel. I’m wondering what drew you to this form, and to the engraving it inhabits, a work that has excited many volumes of commentary and analysis from art historians?

Graham Gussin
Interesting you should mention The Man Who Fell to Earth – I was thinking more specifically of the cover of Bowie’s album, Station to Station, and ideas of transport. I love that the film begins with a fall and the whole of the rest is concerned with trying to become airborne again. A very simple dynamic. I knew of this engraving from many years back, of course, and I had recently watched Lars von Trier’s Melancholia. I was interested in the collision of this subject matter with the science fiction genre. I re-watched Solaris and it struck me then as the most melancholic film imaginable. From that point I got drawn in, and went to the British Museum a number of times to see the print. That stone object was
the most enigmatic element, but I didn’t know what I might do with it. But this form and the idea of transport wouldn’t go away – transport between places or states. Then I saw this object as being delivered elsewhere and multiplied endlessly – one thing led to another. The objects are possibly simply crates.

TM

An aside: I’m pretty sure that the cover of Station to Station, like the cover of Bowie’s Low, is a still from The Man Who Fell to Earth. Thinking about collisions, von Trier’s Melancholia, of course, turns on the imminent collision of a rogue planet – an enigmatic object, like Dürer’s rhombohedron – with the Earth. I’m very interested in Graham’s idea of transport, not just between places, but also (mental) states. A few years back, I read a rather lovely book called Grey Hope,¹ which positioned melancholy not as a synonym for despair but a kind of mellow existential reflectiveness, something that might even be a welcome hill or hollow in our psychic landscape. Perhaps this is a good point to discuss surfaces? While Graham’s In Bloom – a work named after the 1991 Nirvana track? – to a degree resembles the minimalist sculpture of Tony Smith, Donald Judd et al, it is also scandalously comfortable with the pattern, uneven colouration, and heavy whiff of the organic that comes from using plywood. We might also note that Dürer’s rhombohedron has a vague, skull-like stain or shadow on its otherwise plain surface.

GG

I have a copy of Grey Hope here. Perhaps that had something to do with the title In Bloom. Although the subject might be darkness there is something unresolved about them. The Nirvana track was present in my mind but I liked the implication the words have of something beginning and the process of opening, there is something mechanistic in this as well as the organic implication, they are hard edged machines in some sense. I spent a long while looking at different surfaces, I wanted something that implied a vague image or fluidity, the grain of this particular ply has that, something which coheres... or doesn’t. Judd’s plywood pieces were especially relevant; many of those works suggest a receding or closing/opening in their architecture and depth. So they are shifting between states and have these connotations but remain materially the simplest building material. I have a small sign in my studio that says, ‘Make a hollow work.’ This somehow felt part of it while making them.

Andrew Renton

You’re right about the Bowie covers, Tom. It must have been so important to him, to illustrate two albums in succession from the same film. I like what you say about the formal connections with Smith and Judd. I think Judd loved his plywood. He was a sensualist with surface. Guilty pleasures! But I’m also interested in Graham’s less formally resolved works in the show, like the Flag, or most likely, Contraption. Nothing’s disguised here. A bricolage of lowish tech. Are these formal contrasts essential to the show?

GG

The formal contrasts aren’t essential to the show, they are there in the background... Maybe that becomes essential, I’m not sure. It has something to do with grammar I think. I think both Contraption and When the Night Comes are like adaptations. They take elements /objects and adjust them, and they behave differently from then on. I wanted them to feel home made, like they were put

together through contingency which, in a way, they were. What happens in the film is an ‘adaptation’ in the sense that the surroundings are altered by taking advantage of elements within it and adjusting them. The work is another kind of adaptation...

**TM**

*When the Night Comes* is a lovely piece. The sadness of that line from *Solaris* about fixing strips of paper to a space station’s air vents so they rustle like leaves... The sound, itself an adaptation or approximation, passes through Lem’s novel and Tarkovsky’s film, and then into Graham’s work in Marlborough’s gallery space, circling back into reality from fiction. We might imagine standing there late at night, long after the lights have been switched off and the invigilators have clocked off, and this work disclosing itself in a way that’s impossible during the show’s ‘waking life.’ I’m wondering if the contingency Graham speaks of is also relevant to his *Spinners*, and whether their orbital properties might allude not only to Marcel Duchamp’s rotoreliefs, but also to the figure of Lem/Tarkovsky’s space station?

**AR**

The contingency is a very honest way to make a work of art. A bit like the way they tell you to show your working-out at school. But there is, despite this, a transformation, a bit of magic, that occur with, or despite, that cobbled together of elements. A complex array of connections for very quiet, understated, effects. And I love the association with the space station. Space stations and works of art might have something in common in that both have to negotiate something to do with gravity?

**GG**

I’ve been interested in how an effect can be the subject of a work for a while, using dry ice, delay units, etc. The *Spinners* in *Major Gig*, together with the posters, form a kind of collage. For me there is as much connection to the idea of a space station as there is a more formal connection with air – in the vent, wind chime and flag. These works were all made together; there is overlap and mixing. The spinners are like propellers, blurred through speed.

**AR**

That blur is also significant. Of course, in a machine age we are accustomed to seeing blurring everywhere. Speed equals blur. But in the gallery, this is does something else. There a shift in terms of how the viewer can adjust to what is in front them. It’s very different from Richter’s blur, for example, because the image is unreadable. But you know there’s an image to be had, something to be read. The tension for the viewer is, perhaps, the promise of something. And at the same time, the visual experience is heightened by the constant motion, even as it reveals less, even as our eyes try to still what we see. It’s a nice paradox. Many of the works hint at references or sources or quotations that aren’t visible to the viewer. It’s as though these quotations become independent of their sources. I’m thinking of the neon, for example, *The Information*. You couldn’t extrapolate the William Morris reference back to *News from Nowhere*, but it’s important that it’s there.

**TM**

I think Andrew brings up something very important here re: the economy of reference. A work like *The Information* doesn’t so much quote the line describing Morris’ frontispiece to *News*... as encode it, or even return it to the realm of images. Thinking about the title of this work, I’m reminded of the opening lines of Martin Amis’ 1995
novel, *The Information*, which summons up a melancholy, sci-fi vision: “Cities at night, I feel, contain men who cry in their sleep and then say Nothing. It’s nothing. Just sad dreams. Or something like that... Swing low in your weep ship, with your tear scans and your sob probes, and you would mark them.”

**GG**

This neon work, hopefully, does both of those things you mention. It becomes an encoding, containing the ‘information’ from the original but not necessarily revealing it. It also becomes an image again, becomes other things. A piece of crumpled neon unraveled, like a shop receipt; a horizon, the read-out from a device measuring vibration, a signal. I liked the idea of something being written in the sky. That’s why, quite simply, it’s a neon.

**TM**

Perhaps we might return, here, to *Major Gig*, a work I understand grew out of an earlier work, *News from Nowhere*, shown at Graham’s CGAC [Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela] show last year. Many of the words that appear on the posters allude to journeys, quests, forward propulsion: “Wanderlust”, “Trip”, “Discover”, “Fortune”...

**GG**

The posters contain many collaged elements; small things I’d put together in the studio over some time together with new images, they are rich in their references to possible futures, recent pasts, things in ruins etc. They have become a kind of source material for me and have an energy I really like. The record covers were chosen in relation to this, sometimes on a very graphic level, or the use of a single word in the title, very much like working with collage, association, composition... The words are titles from magazines and comics, I made these by going into two stores; Forbidden Planet and WH Smith, in each I bought around 15 publications and used the titles from these to form simple word collages. It’s where the title of the show originates. There are five posters in that series, all called *Headline*. I liked the way they read like announcements, ‘New Mutants Discover Fortune Wavelength’, etc. These collisions are central to all the works in the show, I think.

**TM**

There’s something really appealing about the choice of WH Smith and Forbidden Planet as your sources for this material – one is a newsagent, a seller of reports of contemporary events, the other a seller of fantasies about the distant past, or the far future. I’m wondering what it was about the ‘poster’ form than interests you? It’s an object that inhabits both the private spaces of the bedroom, and the very public spaces of the street.

**GG**

Yes, exactly, I was thinking of this as an interior/exterior formation of things. Ideas and landscapes.

**TM**

I’m curious to know more about the show’s title, *FORSAKENFOCUSVERTIGOPREDICTION*, which you mentioned came out of the posters. Were you thinking, here, of the cut-up techniques of Tristan Tzara, William Burroughs, even David Bowie? Were there other title contenders?

**GG**

Yes, gathering those magazines and playing around with those titles was productive. I made other works from them. There is a series of watercolours and some small
paintings using other configurations of the words. They are not so chance driven though. There is quite a lot of compositional thought, I guess. But they have the same energy, I think. Something immediate and simple to look at, and they don’t make too much sense! The piece we chose as the title seemed to strike the right mood for the works in the show, though all the Headline posters were being considered at one point. I like the musical sense of it, joining the titles altogether as a single word like this adds to that sense.
Graham Gussin

Born
1960, London, UK

Lives and works
London, UK

Education
1989-90 Chelsea School of Art
1980-85 Middlesex Polytechnic

Solo Exhibitions
2014 FORSAKENFOCUSVERTIGOPREDICTION, Marlborough Contemporary, London, UK
2013 CLEARBLUESEYEDDERPWATER, Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain
Close Protection, artSOUTH:collaborations, Wiltshire, UK

Animated Environments, Siobhan Davies Studios, (including off-site project Illumination Rig), London, UK
In and Out, Back and Forth, New Art Centre, Roche Court, Salisbury, UK
2011 As If, Art House Foundation, London, UK
2008 Solar, Galleria de Arte Cinematica, Vila do Conde, Portugal
2007 Pedro Cera Gallery, Lisbon, Portugal
2006 Illumination Rig, Public work, Newcastle City Centre
Spill, Ikon 2, Birmingham, UK
2004 Centre d’Art Santa Monica, Barcelona, Spain
2003 Lisson Gallery, London, UK
2002 Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK
2001 Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, France
States of Mind, New Media Space, New Museum of Contemporary Art, New York, US
2000 Spill, Imperial College, London, UK
1999 Kunsthalle Aarhus, Aarhus, Denmark
1998 Art Now #13, Tate Gallery, London, UK
1997 Fall (7,200-1), Camden Arts Centre, London, UK

Group Exhibitions
2013 93, Galleria de Arte Contemporánea, Santiago de Compostela, Spain
More than I dare to think about, Marlborough Contemporary, London, UK
Recent Acquisitions, Tate Britain, London, UK
2012 Revolver, Matt’s Gallery, London, UK
The Unseen, Fourth Guangzhou Triennial, Guangzhou, China
2011 Super 8, Christopher Grimes Gallery, Santa Monica, California, US
Movements, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art & Reg Vardy Gallery, Sunderland, UK
Illumination Rig, (Inaugural Exhibition) Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK
2010 Never The Same River, Camden Arts Centre, London, UK
Cage Mix, Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK
Le Deuil, Galerie IFF, Marseille, France
2009 Sequelism Part 3, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol, UK
Known Unknowns, Gallery Loop, Seoul, South Korea
In Between the Lines, Trinity Contemporary, London, UK
2008 In The Space of Elsewhere, Stanley Picker Gallery, London, UK
2007 Sharjah Biennial 8: Art, Ecology and the Politics of Change, Sharjah, UAE
Une Histoire a Soi, La Galerie, Centre d’art Contemporain, Noisy-le-sec, France
No, Future, Bloomberg Space, London, UK
2006 One Year, One second, Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France
If it didn’t exist you’d have to invent it, The Showroom, London, UK
2004 Dazzling, Jeu de Paume, Paris, France
In the beginning there was a journey, Pontevedra Biennale, Spain
2003 The Distance Between Me & You, Lisson Gallery, London, UK
This was Tomorrow, New Art Centre, Roche Court, Salisbury, UK
2002 En Route, Serpentine Gallery, London, UK

Collections
Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark
Art Fund (National Collections Fund), London, UK
Arts Council, London, UK
Frac, Champagne-Ardenne, France
Frac, Languedoc-Roussillon, France
Galician Contemporary Art Centre, Santiago de Compostela, Spain
MIMA, Middlesborough, UK
Southampton City Art Gallery, Southampton, UK
Tate, London, UK

Private Collections

Drawing in Space, Drawing Room, London, UK
Silence of the City, Gwangju City Art Museum, Gwangju, South Korea
Garden Built for You, Smart Project Space, Amsterdam, Netherlands
Artifice, Deste Foundation, Athens, Greece
Ingentin/Nothing (curated by Gussin), Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö, Sweden;
NGCA, Sunderland, UK; CAC, Vilnius, Lithuania
Likas, Trafo, House of Contemporary Arts, Budapest, Hungary

Media-City Seoul, Escape, Seoul Metropolitan Museum, South Korea
Graham Gussin
7 Mar – 12 Apr 2014
Marlborough Contemporary
6 Albemarle Street
London W1S 4BY
United Kingdom
+44 (0)20 7629 5161
info@marlboroughcontemporary.com
marlboroughcontemporary.com

© The artist, the authors.
All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, or stored in any retrieval system of any nature without prior written permission of the copyright holders, except for permitted fair dealing under the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

Editor
Andrew Renton

Dialogue
Graham Gussin, Tom Morton, Andrew Renton

Photography
Francis Ware

Design
North

Print
Lecturis

Cover
Munken Pure Rough 170 gsm

Text Pages
Munken Pure Rough 120 gsm

Typeface
Super Grotesk A Regular LF
36/36.5pt, 16/17pt and 8/9pt

ISBN 978-1-909693-07-4
Edition of 500