

# Marlborough Contemporary

Graham Gussin — FORSAKEN FOCUS VERTIG OP PREDICTION

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Marlborough Contemporary London 2014

**Graham  
Gussin**



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## **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

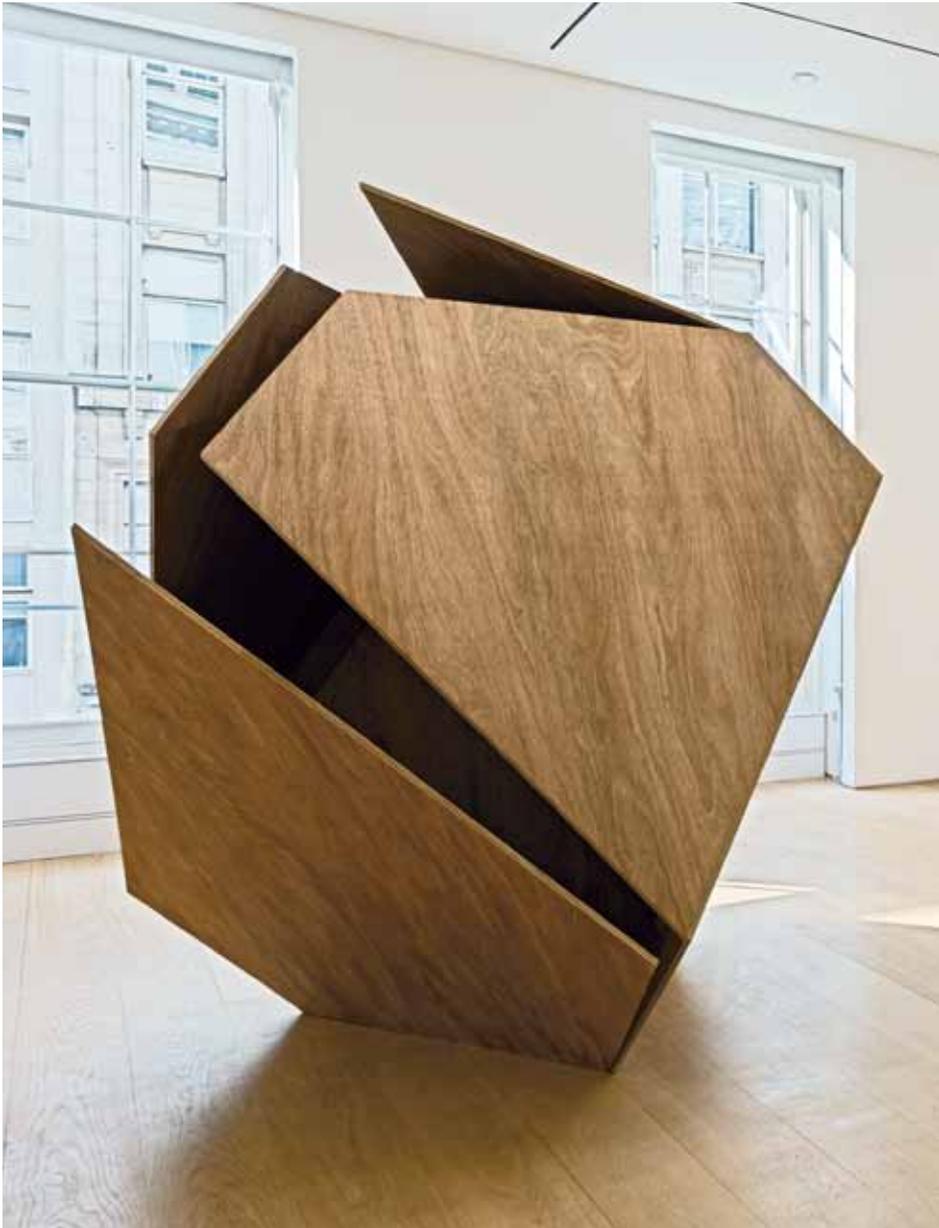


**In Bloom 1**

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





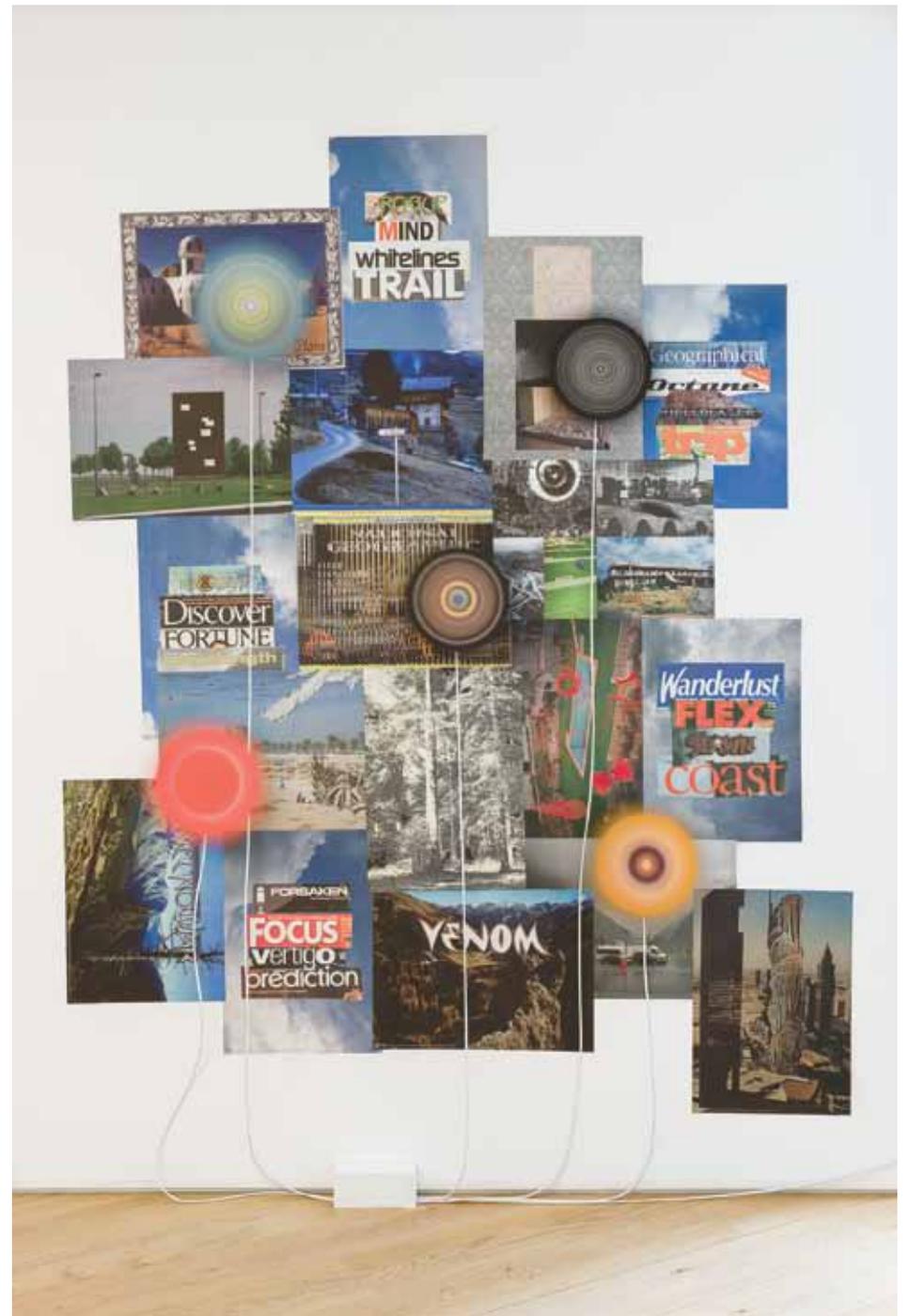
**In Bloom 3**  
2013  
Plywood  
200 × 200 × 220 cm

**Major Gig  
(Pastoral Romantic  
As Is Sub Focus  
Easy Rider In  
Search of Space)**

2014

Record covers,  
motors, posters

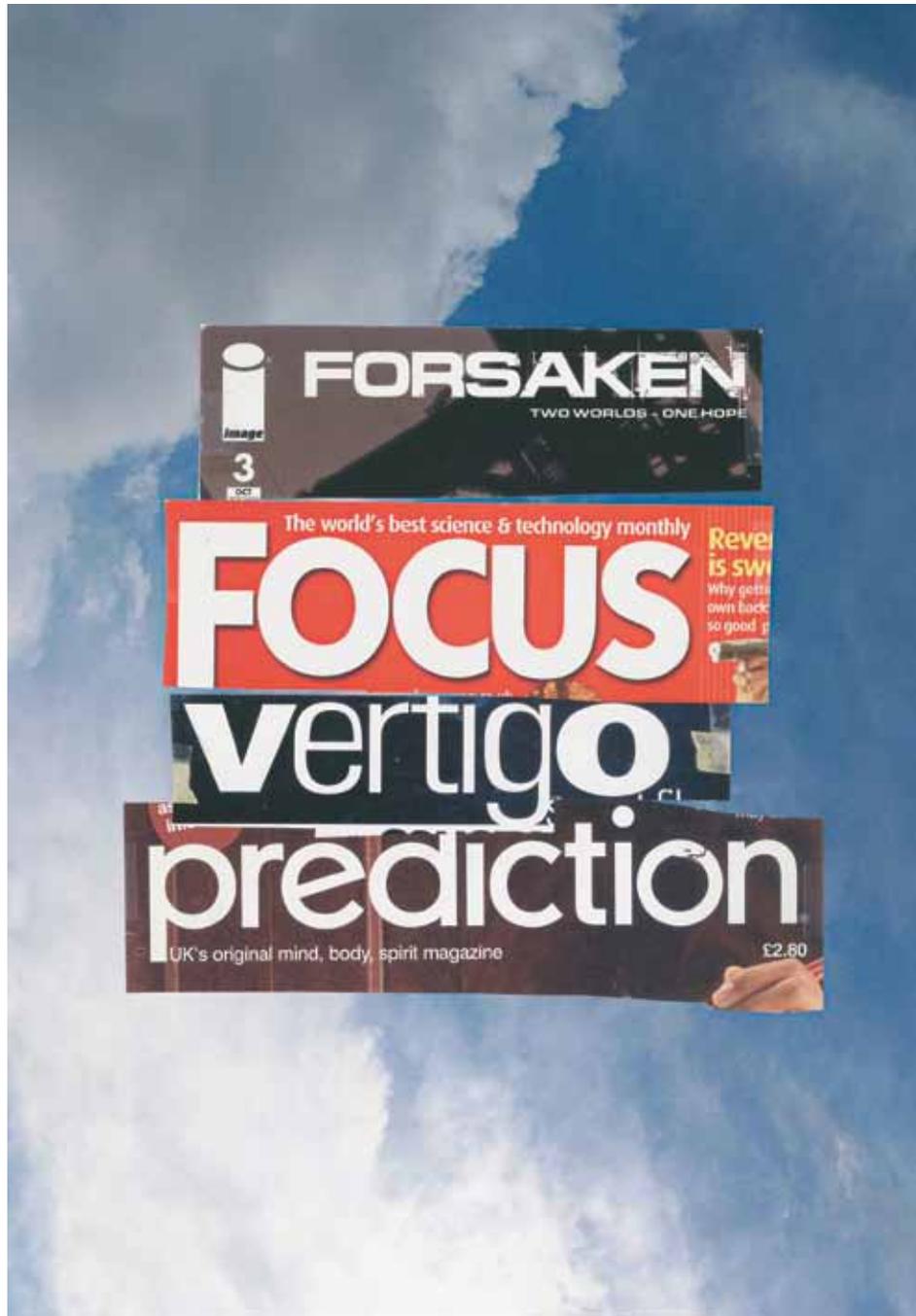
309 × 250 × 9 cm





ROGUE  
MIND  
whitelines  
TRAIL





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)

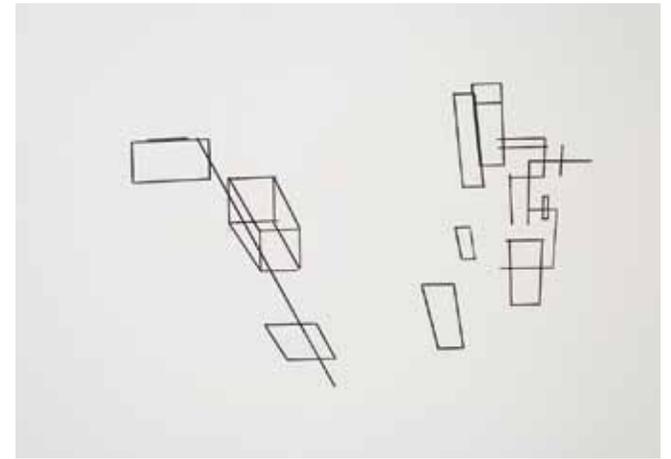
70 × 50 cm



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 x 70 cm

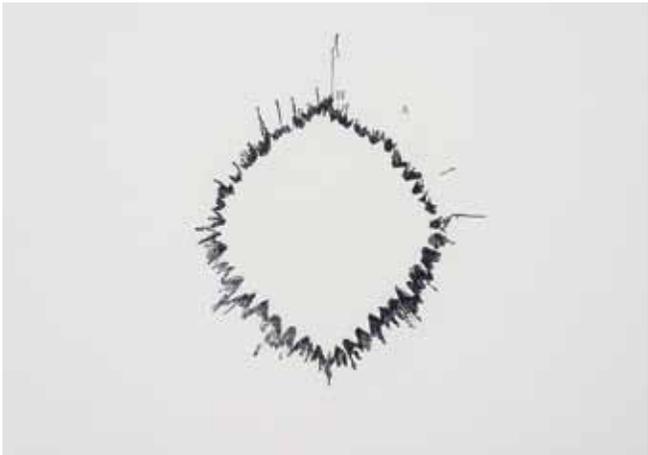
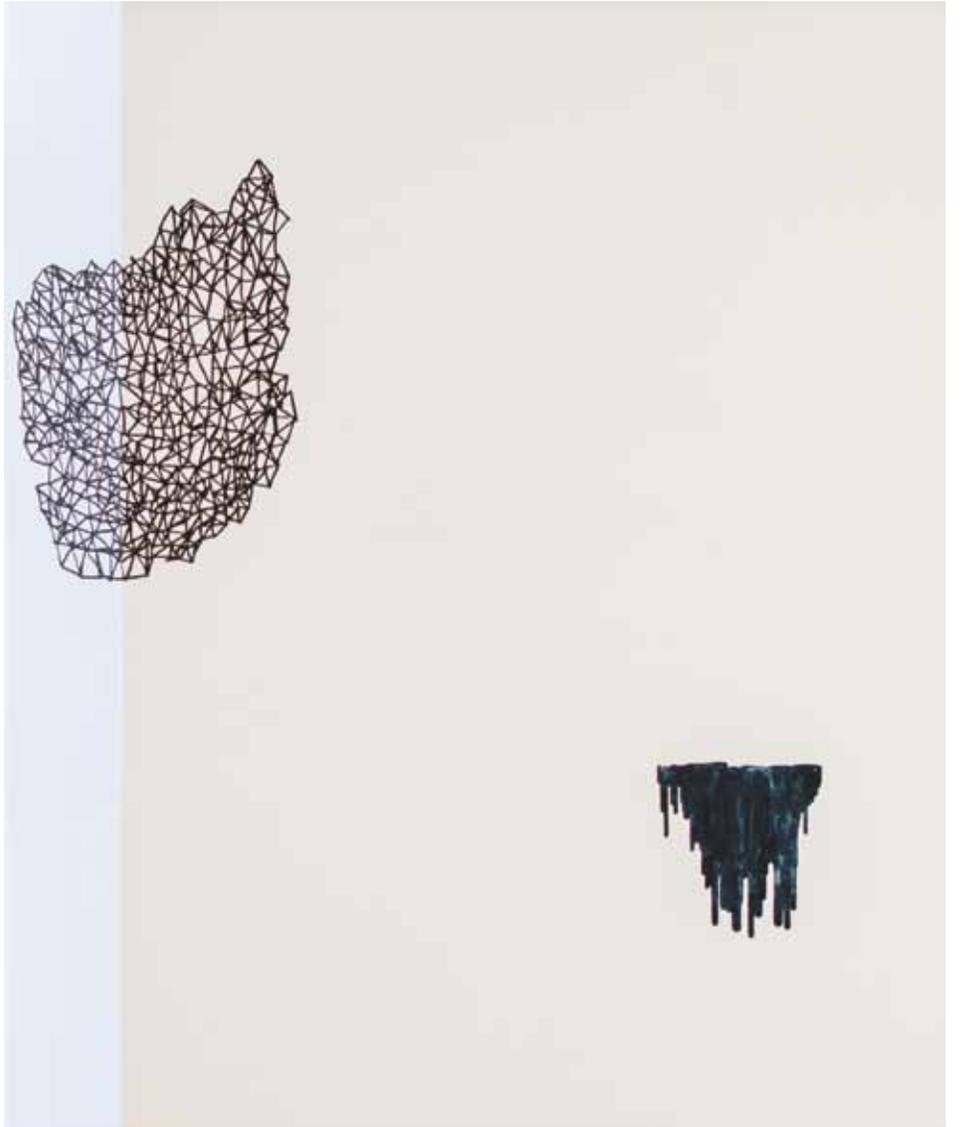


Previous page  
**The Information**  
2014  
Neon  
400 cm length



**Configuration  
(Elements 1–7)**  
2014  
Ink and watercolour  
on walls  
Dimension variable  
(Distributed throughout  
the gallery)





# Dialogue

## '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 **Melancholia 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 **Melancholia 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**,<sup>1</sup> 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

<sup>1</sup> **Grey Hope: The Persistence of Melancholy** /edited by Sigrid Sandsröm and Atopia Projects. Northampton: MA: Atopia Projects, 2006

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 cobbling 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: 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



## 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  
Spill, Off-site, IKON Gallery, Birmingham, UK
- 2013 CLEARBLUESKYDEEPDARKWATER, 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, Galeria 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  
Something Else, Primo Piano, Rome, Italy
- 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, Galego 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
- 2005 OK/Okay, The Grey Art Gallery, NYU, New York, US/Swiss Institute of Contemporary Art, New York, US
- 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  
Géographies #2 – Anri Sala, Graham Gussin, Bas Jan Ader, Marine Hugonnier, Hassan Khan, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris, France

- 2001 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  
Likor, Trafo, House of Contemporary Arts, Budapest, Hungary
- 2000 Moment, Dundee Contemporary Arts, Dundee, UK  
British Art Show 5, Touring: Edinburgh, Southampton, Cardiff, Birmingham, UK  
Tate Triennial: British Art 2000 – Intelligence, Tate Britain, London, UK  
Another Place, Tramway, Glasgow, UK  
Media-City Seoul, Escape, Seoul Metropolitan Museum, South Korea

### 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

# Marlborough Contemporary

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7 Mar – 12 Apr 2014

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