

for artists working across media who call for a self-reflexive approach to the power relations involved in representations of the other. Besides the familiar visual self-othering in photography, artists such as Bouchra Khalili (Reviews AM386), Kutlug Ataman, Suzanne Lacy (AM401), Amar Kanwar, Nishat Awan (AM402), Mohini Chandra and Anthony Luvera have also asked the voiceless to tell their own stories through audio-visual portraiture.

Intriguing, therefore, is Duben's denial of this work as 'documentary'. There exists a clear overlap between art and documentary in much contemporary practice ever since their dangerous liaison began with the 'ethnographic turn' described by Hal Foster in 1996.

The age-old issue within artwork of a documentary leaning has been identical to that of mainstream anthropology: opposing objective to subjective accounts. In the former, the eye is a spying eye of surveillance, dutifully detached and constructed by Renaissance perspective to place man at the centre of the universe. It foreshadows Michel Foucault's 'eminence grise' of the gaze as instrument of knowledge and control. With Cubism and Surrealism as models for a multiplicity of perspectives, ocular authority is shattered by a fragmented vision corresponding to the political crises of their time. Such a leap opened the door to the 'mind's eye', the vision of which was introspective and reflexive, awake to its subjective influence on the 'objective'.

Duben's installation manifests a reflection on such shifts. Cool, minimal and apparently objective, it is based on an observational aesthetic. Each of the six portraits delivers a subjective rant made up of stories of pain and frustration, strangely recounted with detached poise. This is far from the dramatic and dialectical montage of ethnographic filmmaker Jean Rouch. It is closer to the earlier tradition of observational cinema, influenced by the neorealism of Italian cinema, that inspired David MacDougall's documentary use of deep focus to reveal the authentic through critical reasoning. Duben's method is similarly unspectacular. The presentation is not so much about 'showing' as about 'telling', the tales told avoid a linear narrative by their informal disposition in space and the lack of any authorial voice-over.

Polyphonic voices are embodied through strongly individual poses. They propose a corporeal encounter between subject and spectator who finds herself listening, partly as an eavesdropper, partly as a voyeur, perhaps as an ethnographer, although she remains an observer rather than a participant. Vision and voice fuse to seduce yet refuse to exchange with the spectator. Dialogue cannot take place because the spectator remains a viewer but hardly a listener. This is due to the force of the visual that dominates the delicate audio, handicapped by the voice-over tape operated on justifiable 'politically correct' grounds whereby both languages are given equal space. This does not work for both technical and physiological reasons because the human ear, unless highly trained like that of a UNESCO translator, cannot easily absorb simultaneous transmission of two different languages.

One remedy might come through the artist performing Walter Benjamin's 'Task of the Translator': 'to release in his own language that pure language that is under the spell of another', but where does that leave dialogue with the spectator, whispering in the dark? ■

**VIRGINIA WHILES** is an art historian, critic and author.

## Patrick Goddard: Go Professional

**Seventeen Gallery** London 28 April to 3 June

We live, according to the essayist Adam Kotsko, in an 'awkward age'. In his short and admittedly monocultural book on the subject, the author ascribes the ubiquity of this uneasy social dynamic to the dissolution of 'stable norms' by the identity-fracturing cultural upheavals of the 1960s and, more recently, the post-industrial formation of a precarious and entrepreneurial cognitariat which adopts and exploits certain lifestyles with an ease not afforded to all. This is a form of awkwardness that may be viewed as a symptom of systemic socio-economic factors. But must awkwardness always delineate an interpersonal impasse at the boundaries

**Patrick Goddard**  
*Gone to Croatia*  
2014



of cultural identity? In a present stifflingly defined by the dull reverberations of the echo chamber, could awkwardness provide a viable vector for renewed understanding between those not commonly predisposed to seeing eye to eye?

The three short films comprising Patrick Goddard's exhibition 'Go Professional' are by turns awkward, astute, cringe-inducing and truly laugh-out-loud funny. From Waldenesque self-sufficiency, through the disorienting predictions of speculative finance to the social obligations of an artist on residency, these films trace the moral underpinnings of lifestyles that express a complicity with, or assumed alternative to, post-crash capital. They do this by staging a series of uncanny, possibly semi-scripted interviews that subject the very presumption of artistic moral rectitude to the same scrutiny that it has been habitually inclined to level at supposedly bovine utopianism or bullish avarice.

With *Gone to Croatan*, 2014, the first work encountered here in a series of atmospheric video installations, the artist sets the tone and form of his mockumentary style, tracking down an old friend who dropped off the map into a life of solitary self-reflection and pious asceticism. Shot entirely with a head-mounted GoPro camera, the film documents a series of intimate conversations either by campfire, while out foraging for food or traipsing through the tilled fields of rural Cambridgeshire. 'We all know there's something terribly wrong with society,' the film's subject, Adam, intones, 'but we can't agree on how to fix it.' What emerges is an image of naive, practised idealism, frequently undercut by Goddard's acerbic dismissals that retreating into the woods might be nothing more than a 'middle-class luxury'; a cynicism that quickly appears mannered in the face of Adam's earnest and quietist efforts to justify his retreat.

*Greater Fool Theory*, 2015, shown in a suitably spartan office space replete with swivel chairs, pursues another subject from the artist's childhood: Sam, now working as a quantitative analyst for HSBC. As Goddard visits Sam at home or in the plazas and public squares of Canary Wharf, a lyrical sparring unfolds that pits the ethics of financial speculation against the supposed critical lucidity of the artist. Goddard's attempts to portray banking as a cloistered and self-perpetuating evil are brilliantly countered by Sam's observation that art school is nothing but a 'deluge of opinion spouted by dickheads in haircuts'. 'You all go there at a scarily young age to be indoctrinated in ill-thought-through pseudo-socialist politics,' he suggests, 'it's like you get your political opinions via group text message from central artist HQ run by Jeremy Deller.'

Indeed, Goddard receives further chastisement from Dagenham-based artist Ravinder Atwal, who, at the outset of *Tune Into Sanity FM!*, 2017, chides that 'the last thing this area needs is some middle-class artist shipped here from trendy Hackney, reducing it to a few scraps of angsty prose-fucking-poetry'. It is a statement made all the more of an affront by the preceding few minutes of film in which the artist has done exactly that, delivering a series of gritty topographical takes on the condition of this east London borough.

Goddard's previous films, chapbooks and performances have consistently characterised his artistic output as a testing conflation of contradictions, a situation effectively skewered by his schizoid performance *No Ironic Tip of the Hat to Class Consciousness Can Save Us Now!* (performed in 2015 at Grand Union in Birmingham), which paired the pursuit of authenticity and political virtuosity with an aloofness to the realisation that an artist's actions might easily slake the

thirst of the gentrification juggernaut. His hallmark off-camera monologues, delivered with a caustic relish, unfurl like Pierre Bourdieu's social analyses re-penned by virtuoso comic book author Grant Morrison, and his purposefully modish appropriation of the textual vocabulary of 'urban decline' seems to echo the putrid confessionals of Louis Ferdinand Céline, whose own semi-fictionalised biographical works were explorations of guilt and cowardice set amid the 'authenticating' disease-scapes of cities in ruin.

'Awkwardness isn't static,' Kotsko writes, 'it spreads.' And laughing and cringing along to Goddard's films is a strangely infectious affair. The works comprising 'Go Professional' are wonderfully disarming, restaging awkwardness as a discursive practice in which some kind of understanding might come from the vulnerability of embarrassment and its often blathering conversational rectification. ■

JAMIE SUTCLIFFE is a writer and publisher based in London.

## Enter Stage Left: The craft of theatre in art

Lewis Glucksman Gallery Cork

14 April to 9 July

Berthold Brecht's conviction that 'the illusion created by the theatre must be a partial one, so that it can always be recognised as illusion' is given as an impetus for this exhibition. Display is an area that crosses the boundaries between art and theatre and one that has been at the forefront of critique for some time. But where do the boundaries of display begin? How do I start to encounter this show?

Climbing the numerous stairs, both at the entranceway and before the gallery, concretely frame my entry to the show. Over the edge of the top step leading into the gallery, silver strips and the primary red corner of a painted plane weightlessly come into view. The airy reveal is welcoming. Lothar Götz's framework *Pas de Trois*, 2016, lightly responds to the designs of Oskar Schlemmer's 1922 *Triadic Ballet* as well as to the architecture of the gallery itself. Meandering between the three pine display tables that stand at angles to the blaring flat fields of primary red, blue and salmon, I cross the threshold of the partition wall towards the work of Gareth Kennedy.

*The Uncomfortable Science*, 2016, is an enclosed back-projection of a video – effectively forming a large wooden TV – that stands with its screen facing the entrance. Enclosing the projector and the contours of its throw in wood at this scale makes for an almost cartoonish sculptural object. Footage comprises craftsmen, commissioned by Kennedy, at work carving portraits that can be worn as masks, hollowing out wood chunks, boring holes to make pupils.

To the left, the three finished masks hang on the dark painted surface of the wall. Spot lit, the carved facets of these wooden faces stand in relief. These are the portraits of three scientists who worked in South Tyrol, an Italian province with a native German-speaking population bordering Austria. Beyond the large wooden horizontal pyramid, at its retreating/projecting end, another video, displayed on a Sony box monitor, displays footage of people dressed in raggedy costumes running around madly in not-many-frames-per-second. This is archival footage of the films that the Austrian