



# humdrum

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The Store

26.09 →

17.10

2019



**Ruth Chambers**  
*RSVP, 2019*  
 Coloured and graphite pencils and gel pens on found envelope

→ Ruth Chambers blurs the boundaries between object and drawing in an ongoing investigation into the patterns and structures found on the inside of envelopes. Taking the lead from the object's original structures and identity, Chambers employs different mark making techniques that correspond to the repetition and pattern on the printed surface.

The idea of drawing onto envelopes first came to Chambers when she was working in an office. She recalls receiving, opening and discarding dozens of letters weekly. Increasingly mindful of this process, she began to notice the different patterns on their interiors. Through a variety of marks, Chambers creates new patterns within the envelopes' surface structure; familiar stationery, such as biro and gel pens, further connects the artwork to the everyday experience.

Chambers' intricate and labour-intensive works transform the most disposable of objects that pass daily through our hands. The highly detailed and repetitive patterns create an illusion that challenges a viewer's perception of the object's origin, highlighting the transience of communication in our digital culture.

**Torn-open envelopes have fulfilled their function, they are husks, the seed they carried now gone. The message, important at the time, is often lost to history. The stories, requests, news, hopes, yearning, waiting, not-knowing, doubting of the writer can only be imagined.**



**Ian Gouldstone**  
*Wanton Boys, 2017*  
 Site-specific live simulation

→ Ian Gouldstone creates work that plays between narrative and abstraction. Through narrative, the work builds the viewer's confidence and curiosity to meet the demands that abstraction places on our imagination. Gouldstone's practice draws upon his previous professional background in videogames and animation, often employing computer code in the form of software simulation. He says 'I use this material because its surface can feel immediately alluring, but its inner workings are hidden. This obfuscation can create mystery, but also an undesirable passivity'. To counter this effect, he combines his code with sculpture to form what he calls 'structures'. This combination invites viewers to look at software actively, subjecting it to modes of looking and critique normally reserved for traditional artistic media. The work exhibited in 'humdrum' combines software and sculpture through projection; a live simulation of kinetic shapes is projected onto laundry hung on domestic air dryers.

**Screens are everywhere, constantly feeding us. But their inner workings are hidden from us. We seldom think about what a screen is, where it came from, or what it is doing. We tend to just sit there, passively accepting its content. I like to project onto things in an effort to break the screen and make us think about what we're actually looking at.**



**Adam Hennessey**  
*Basketball V Football, 2016*  
 Acrylic on canvas

→ Adam Hennessey writes comics from a first-person singular point of view about impactful moments in his life. Through writing and drawing he relives an experience to try to better understand it for himself. He uses humour and a light heartedness to temper the often awkward and humiliating content. He presents an inner dialogue with his personal life as the basis for the paintings he creates in his studio.

For 'humdrum' he is showing a group of paintings that celebrate everyday objects, playfully flipping or exaggerating familiar scenarios to enhance their strangeness. In 'Seagulls', birds peer through the black hexagonal shapes in a football. In 'Basketball vs Football', two balls are caught suspended in motion.

In 'Pizza', a slice of discarded pizza levitates above the cracks in the pavement depicting his love/hate relationship with the 'Pizza GoGo' takeaway opposite his flat. Hennessey's paintings are immediate, the pleasure in painting is explored via multiple visual manners and styles; paint is joyfully applied to capture Hennessey's rich palette of cultural references and ever extending daily observations of the world around him.

**I am someone who draws on what is in front of them whether it is something I see on my walk to the studio or what I'm having for dinner. For me painting is about confidence and having fun and then establishing possible meanings in the work by investing more thought into the subject matter.**

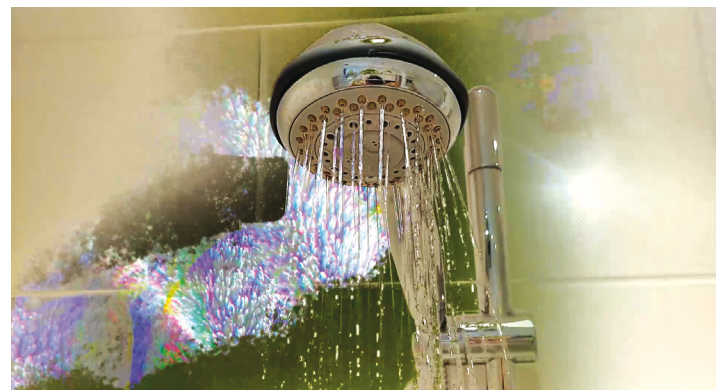


**James Irwin**  
*Chroma-rot (Hotelpondscape), 2019*  
 Digital Film

→ James Irwin's work investigates the capacity of physical and digital media to evoke/provoke an authentic experience in a post-truth context, where anxiety and uncertainty become valid or unavoidable creative positions. Using digital media, printmaking, sculpture, sound and moving image, he reworks and manipulates content from on and offline sources to shift or skew the relationship between the physical world and its digital image. For 'humdrum', Irwin is showing a recent work, titled 'Chroma-rot (Hotelpondscape)'. In this video work, Irwin subverts the use of a video compositing technique known as chroma-keying to examine the relationship between the human body and its digital image. Particular focus is placed on how the human form, (in this case, the artist's body) is affected by the shift of environment from physical three-dimensional space to a two-dimensional screen-based surface.

Chroma-keying is a method of creating images by digitally merging the foreground and background of separate scenes into one surface. Chroma-keyed images create fictions, where the subject is commonly shot against a blue or green screen backdrop. Through the trickery of digital effects, narratives are produced by seamlessly blending two recordings into one, shifting from a real-world scenario into an artificial pictorial plane where space and time are flattened. The level to which these images suspend our disbelief is dependent on efficacy at the point of production; if inaccurate, the fictional scene created through chroma-keying would be disconnected from how we experience the world. The illusion of reality (the fourth wall) would shatter.

**The video work operates in the space created by intentionally breaking this illusion. Using smartphone video recordings and photos taken on a family holiday to France, together with images and videos of objects and materials in my flat, the work uses the everyday to establish a disconnect between physical and digital reality.**



**Bruce Ingram**  
*Around in Blue, 2019*  
 Mixed media on wood painting support

→ Bruce Ingram works primarily in a collage technique to create works that are constantly shifting from the flat to three-dimensional. His dynamic and gestural materials-led practice takes form in works on paper, sculpture and painting. From this starting point, he combines layers of meaning in sculptural and assembled works, where found objects are combined with more traditional art materials. Studio debris provides both the reference and the raw material for the creation of abstract compositions that rely on chance juxtapositions and experimentation. Ingram's collaged works share a modernist concern with shape and form, often blurring the boundaries between the figurative and the abstract. Through the process of 'play', materials are assembled and morphed together, traces and histories of the work's production are layered and

concealed. Ingram often physically edits his work by collapsing and joining works together, producing outcomes that are a manifestation of starting points and compositions. The simple mechanism of the staple gun holds and attaches planes of paper which are often pinned in a temporal fashion which suggest the familiar transience of a noticeboard.

**My approach to painting is similar to how I approach sculpture, the process is physical with the picture plane a surface to explore texture and layering before colour and composition. The studio environment is rich with process that becomes recycled back into the history of a work's narrative. DIY materials are used to impersonate the role of the traditional application of oil paint, making an immediate and direct reference to the real world they inhabit.**



**Jack Lavender**  
*Now And Then It Comes Back To Me 2, 2014*  
 Mixed media on glass

→ Jack Lavender's work draws from both low-pop culture and the natural world. The work on display in 'humdrum' is from a larger series of works that explore the space between two large sheets of glass, in which Lavender sandwiches a broad range of materials that are both organic and manufactured. Pressed against the glass surface or wedged in the shallow space between, materials and objects appear to be randomly arranged or simply lie on the bottom of the vitrine, fallen due to gravity. Commercial paints are poured and printing toners provide explosive colour pigment.

Walks home from school led Lavender past an old factory with a smashed double-glazed window at street level, presenting a small aperture into which he could stuff varied materials gathered on these walks. Old candy wrappers, chewing gum, twigs, leaves, left over soda; the materials Lavender dropped between the two panes settled in layers over time, their composite form ultimately presenting an image.

Lavender reflects upon his own biography in this work but also includes visual references from a wider shared culture. Through his own language of collage and assemblage, objects that would normally be the detritus of our lives are paired with artistic application and construction.

**I'd play around with materials and it was fun rather than art. But always you seem to come back to memories and past experiences. I think that's what we do as humans, make connections between things.**





**Hamish Pearch**  
*Burnt Toast Penny Bun, Burnt Toast*  
*Flammulaster Granulosus, 2019*  
 Resin, epoxy putty, oil paint

→ Hamish Pearch's work reflects on the systems and experiences of place through objects, to consider the way we exist in and understand the world around us. By reproducing found objects and placing them in spatial relationships, he addresses the complex links between surface, scale, reality and artifice and how this can create shifting situations of banality and magic. The work in 'humdrum' has been developed from his recent installation at the Royal Academy Schools which used the strategies of storage to explore ways of gathering and visualising time, geographies and histories. Pearch examines the ambiguous relationship between objects and images that surround us today through mixing and remaking forms, aiming to question the stability of the material world and our place within it.

Pearch's hand-modelled and painted sculptures of fungi sprout from cast resin toast, made to look burnt. The fungi may be beige and unassuming, yet it is a relentless force in a blackened void. They are placed on a portable table, the kind of object commonly found at car-boot sales or a fleeting event. Here today, gone tomorrow. Pearch is interested in where these types of makeshift events happen, typically on the outskirts of towns and cities.

**I like to think about spaces that aren't quite city, aren't quite countryside. I think these neglected peripheries, which you pass through without acknowledging, are actually incredibly rich. In-between business parks, railways and motorways - these are wild spaces that nature reclaims.**



**Rob Reed**  
*Nomad, 2018*  
 Oil on canvas

→ Rob Reed's practice is that of a 'Romantic Realist', depicting a sense of melancholy deriving from the loss of Romanticism's admiration of the sublime found in nature, re-evaluating the emotion of the romantic trait to seek the essence of everyday life. His subject matter is about bringing to light aspects that we consider mundane and moments which we usually disregard or miss, to develop a new sense of their appreciation. Reed's eye is drawn to places that are generally overlooked, forgotten or await development. His small paintings record the unacknowledged or ignored spaces that we navigate in our daily lives; the overgrown, dead-end, broken and graffiti sprawled are rendered in exquisite detail. For 'humdrum', Reed is making new paintings and drawings in response to the local area. Reed follows in the footsteps of Camille Pissarro who spent a year in nearby Norwood between 1870-71, escaping the Franco Prussian War in France. Pissarro made a number of significant works during his stay, including a view of the recently built Dulwich College; he was fascinated by the evolving suburbs of Sydenham and Dulwich and the new inter-connecting rail network that joined the city and the suburbs.

**Although my studies are based on my own personal experiences or observations from the surrounding landscape, I don't intend to make the locations known so that instead they strive to serve as the everywhere or nowhere places of ambiguous familiarity, capturing the unconscious mood, presenting a psychological space rather than a topological description.**



**Sebastian Sochan**  
*Dont Turn Against Me, 2018*  
 Set design environment, hand made objects, sculptures and textiles

→ Instinct for materials and emotional responses play a crucial role in how Sebastian Sochan's sculptural works are created. This type of intuition is a catalyst for him to respond and react to his everyday relationships with surroundings, materials and self. His work takes grace in its vulnerability to the world and explores the emotive and humble quality of materials, testing the borders between fragility and robustness. Utilising a diverse range of materials such as sugar, paper and textiles, Sochan forms unmonumental works

that reference bodies, fashion, set design and the everyday. Sochan is interested in the idea of 'taste' and beauty; the excessive use of sugar, form, colour and textile techniques is a way to question our relationship to the world of aesthetics and objects. For 'humdrum' he has made new works that have been partly made on site in the gallery space. The new work explores ideas of intimacy, closeness and the common obstacles of a relationship, taking inspiration from how we, as bodies, intertwine and often blend, blur and reflect each other and the bittersweet restrictions we face. Separately they are fragile and unstable but together they balance, stand firm and hold each other strong against all odds.

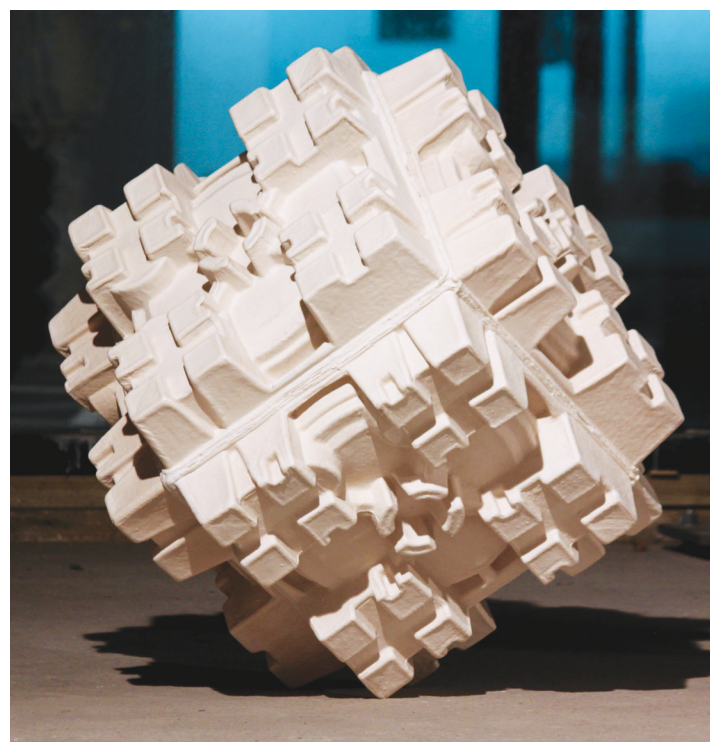
**In the process of making, I let each stage be a suggestion, allowing the materials to have some power and create a symbiotic relationship with emotions. The work has the ability to be gestural and accidental, uncertain and comforting, longing for something desirable and imaginary.**



**Robin Tarbet**  
*Numatic Cube, 2018*  
 Jesomonite

→ Robin Tarbet's practice is concerned with the physical materiality of everyday technology, from consumer products to industrial systems. Much of his work revolves around the notion of the material residue of technological progress and he creates physical responses to data in the form of futuristic monuments, fossil ruins and present day technological relics. Tarbet assumes the role of a curious folk-scientific-explorer, which leads him to dismantle, dissect, and distort everyday technologies and appliances to examine the aesthetic and conceptual properties of the built environment, against the increasingly technological, yet mysterious worlds within. It is with this very real stuff that his own fascination with perceived reality, science fiction, illusion and the unusual effects of scale and perspective combine. Tarbet's recent series of monolithic sculptures are formed through the gathering of discarded polystyrene packaging from electronic products, and through casting, stacking and repetition, the familiar and practical nature of the once contained product becomes abstracted. The use of packaging materials hints at the quickly functionless components and transient mechanisms surrounding capitalism. In repurposing these practical polystyrene forms as moulds to make his concrete sculptures, Tarbet creates physical shadows which transforms the mundane and disposable into the permanent and solid.

**My work typically starts by walking and collecting objects often discarded en route to my studio. From the sci-fi facade of polystyrene packaging to the glistening gem-like fragments of a smashed windscreen, I have always been drawn to remnants of the mass produced, that now redundant have the potential to be reimagined into new and unique forms.**



**Mimei Thompson**  
*Sleeping Fly (Leg Tangle), 2018*  
 Oil on canvas

→ Mimei Thompson's paintings are both process-based and representational. Paint marks function descriptively, but their physicality, as paint and as traces of gesture, also remains dominant. The world in the paintings has a sense of fluidity and a commonality, where everything is made of the same substance and there exists the feeling that forms could morph and shapeshift.

In the chosen subject matter of the paintings, there is a preoccupation with the everyday, and with this being transformed, through the attention given to it, into something strange, radiant or poetic. There is an attraction to finding beauty and metaphoric richness in overlooked and 'low' subject matter, with insects, weeds, city streets and neglected corners being repeatedly pictured.

**An ongoing theme of investigation, both in the form and the content of the work, is the idea that the natural always exists as a construct. There is an awareness of the impossibility of pure nature, coupled with a longing for it. There is a desire, knowingly unattainable, for a direct connection to origin and authenticity.**



**Craig Wylie**  
*Bucket With Branches, 2018*  
 Oil on linen

→ Craig Wylie's work revolves principally around the search to extend the genres of still-life and figure painting. For 'humdrum', Wylie is showing a selection of small works that represent disregarded and salvaged objects in the artist's studio. Wylie's subjects for these paintings arrive unbidden, often when he might be thinking of something else; 'suddenly my visual interest is piqued by a chanced upon object composition of objects; or place, all ordinarily undeserving of a second glance'. Wylie selects subjects that resonate a peculiarly straightforward truth and beauty, despite their apparent lowliness.

The reasons for their selection are all different. It could be related to their materiality, as in the painterly accreted lime cement on the builders' bucket or the broken and run-over umbrella found on the road outside his former studio in Hackney Wick.

The low-brow subject matter for these Still Life studies resonates with Wylie's interest in the potential for anything to be a subject for a painting. In choosing to paint, questions such as 'What can painting be?' and 'What is a (proper) subject?', are important, but they can be restrictive. In a medium which carries such weighted history, an instinctive response to the ordinary and overlooked objects and spaces we encounter in our usual routines - the humdrum - seems fertile ground for making paintings precisely because they are not weighted. Their seemingly non-subject status is what allows them to become subjects in the painting process.

**In 'Studio floor sweepings' and 'Broken Umbrella', the totality of intensive focus in paint seems to conjure an impression of the universe, of flotsam and jetsam floating in space, shards of a galactic disaster, the human inferred but no longer present, the artist's hand painted out of the picture, only the gaze remaining, a sort of interstellar frozen stare.**





# Sideways Past The Tracks

My morning walk from West Dulwich station to the College is a familiar journey. Exiting the station along the overgrown footpath provides a shortcut to my classroom at the top of the campus, always offering visual simulation that I acknowledge as part of my daily routine. I walk past the netted fencing that contains a collection of lost footballs living wedged in the undergrowth between the tracks and the fence, fading and never to be retrieved. I enjoy witnessing the seasonal changes that take place in the community allotments; the bins in the housing estate always catch my eye, often overfilled and providing a new offering of broken domestic appliances. The local cats wander along the fence outlining their territory, regardless of the busy commuters passing by.

These personal points of interest somehow create a reference point to how I think of my day ahead. Such dreary things seem to inspire; the cycle always continues as time passes, the seasons change, flowers blossom, leaves fall, bins are emptied, the path is cleared. This unspectacular and perhaps humdrum experience has been the inspiration in coordinating the eponymous group exhibition that extends upon the theme of the everyday and unspectacular.

Idiosyncratically English, the world humdrum is familiar to many. Humdrum is a word that has a wide range of connotations and associations: boredom, ordinary, dull, repetitive, banal, tedious and unremarkable to name a few, it is a funny word to say aloud and is an example of grammatical reduplication or repetitive rhyming, much like other wonderful informal words such as 'itsy-bitsy' or 'okey-dokey'. Some sources suggest the use of 'humdrum' to describe such a dull and ordinary situation can be traced back to at least the 16th century.

A more grey and drizzly reference from my own twentieth century teenage experience comes from the words of Morrissey. The famous Smiths song 'William, It Was Really Nothing' chimes through the singalong chorus of 'The rain falls hard on a humdrum town, this town has dragged you down'. Equally the brilliant 'Everyday Is Like Sunday', a song about a seaside town that should have been closed down. Morrissey's cutting lines 'Everyday is silent and grey' seem to typify the humdrum experience and places we might wish to forget. Morrissey's depiction of a grey and somewhat miserable portrait of 1980s England provides a suitable context to explore humdrum's meanings and associations that is perhaps viscerally relevant. The invited artists play with the many shades of what might be considered to be 'humdrum'. The immediate is visible in process, the disposable transformed into the monumental, the humble elevated to the beautiful, the digital programmed towards infinity.

Jack Lavender's glass work of sandwiched detritus, reflects upon his own ritualistic activities that took place on his way home from school, Rob Reed paints places similar to the scenes depicted in my own commute to the school, unspecific to anywhere but familiar to everyone. Hamish Pearch's sculptures of burnt toast with sprouting mushrooms turn the familiar into the magical, their small scale contrasting to Sebastian Sochan's commissioned pastel coloured sculpture that fuses sugar and body cream on its glistening surface.

The exhibition in the gallery space, 'The Store', provides a suitable context for such a theme, in the shadow of the iconic Neo-gothic architecture of the Barry Buildings. The school's creative space is almost hidden, a room which was once a storage space for unused furniture has been transformed by the Art Department into a contemporary exhibition space, exposed brickwork and piping providing a working backdrop of function and utility.

As a teacher of art, I often remind students that creativity can be sparked from looking closely at the familiar; what we think we know and perhaps take for granted can often be the catalyst to spark investigation. Inspiration can come from simple things; slowing down and looking sideways can be creatively rewarding. The exhibition situated in the context of the school will hopefully provide a trigger for young visitors to reflect upon their own daily experiences and examine the immediate world with fresh eyes. Perhaps the artworks on display might prompt us all to slow our daily lives and take time to consider what we think we already know.

Bruce Ingram  
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