

Modern Matter, July 17, 2013

Interview: Gabriele Beveridge by Alex Bennett



**Alex Bennett:** Your work suggests an almost spiritual approach to materials, with many of your compositions including natural forms and minerals (marble, for instance, or sand). Can you describe what these materials make you feel, exactly, and how you come to create these contrasts between them?

**Gabriele Beveridge:** I'm interested in materials that hover between states of the real or imagined: sometimes as precious as an exuberant overstatement, and sometimes a promise of future exchange, lubricated by vanity. Mainly, it stems from a general interest in the latent – almost romantic – nature of geological substances. I like to relate photography and the abilities of the camera to these minerals and rocks – matter that emits fields of energy and natural forces imperceptible to the naked eye. The most obvious connection is between the stillness and frailty of the images, and the feeling that's inherent in the “natural” elements alongside them; of geological time, and their purely physical hardness. I'm also fascinated by the space between raw and cognitive materials. This is the middle ground charted by acts of fabrication (not to mention certain parallels in the ways they crystallise, stratify, and erode).

**AB:** There's a tension within the imagery you use, and the way in which it is framed. Your placement of fashion images is suggestive of new codes, and new modes of interaction (which is clear, especially, in *Newly Laundered Smile*). How do you consider images in your art? Is their beauty – divorced from its original context – intended to create tension?

**GB:** The images are the central obsession around which the other objects follow, often becoming simple props or misdirections. I'm trying to interrupt the illusion of naturalism by which these fashion visuals you mention often communicate. Although what's most essential to me is the ambiguity of the image – the idea of the consumption of images as the germination of a collective unconscious, or “mass consciousness.” The attention granted to image placement is meant to evoke the mechanics rather than specificities of intimacy, history and valuation. So yes: the works elaborate the means by which fugitive items – untethered from their original context – still act for a score for new imaginaries. The past is, now and forever, a draft for the future.

**AB:** Your work often portrays a unique relationship between opposing timescales: the continuity of organic materials and the idea of our marketed image culture come together to form a hybrid of time itself. Would you say your work threads notions of time, place, serenity and speed together? Does the fractionous value of imagery – and its reproduction – concern you?

**GB:** I think that time helps form a dislocation from an image's original context, testing the pull of traditions against the sensibilities of the present. It becomes a critical instrument in my work, deflecting the possibility of distinguishing between how materials and ideas operate. I'm trying to question relations between historicity and value in a way that would be impossible if my work were to limit itself to images and objects of the present. Although different compositions insinuate temporal registers, the focus here is on aura rather than argument –

what one could call their ‘delivery’ rather than their ‘demonstration’.

**AB:** There also seems to be a Museological approach to your exhibitions. Do you feel concerned with preserving elements of classicism when installing your work?

**GB:** I’m fascinated by the idea that classicism is underwritten by overexposure. In this way, it is little different from its apparent opposites: camp and cliché. In terms of framing and display, the museological is a device for evoking the impact now discarded in the bleached-out, faded, outdated—the complex chain of events by which visibility tangles with legitimation. Museological qualities also play into constructing the way that historical imaginaries are re-evaluated and vamparised. Not only space but also time granulates the identity of the consumer.

**AB:** Many of your works portray an image of the exotic – I’m thinking particularly of a group exhibit, together with Tomas Downes and Stuart Elliot. Is the sensuality of a utopian paradise something you want to displace, or to re-imagine for the viewer?

**GB:** The imposition of time is both congruent with and irreducible to the imposition of cultural distance. I feel that the exotic is a way of coding a disappearing quantity in our current cultural disposition of informalised labour: we’re living the sunset of unadulterated leisure. Perhaps it’ll go dusky, or disappear forever.

**AB:** Can you share anything you are working on at the moment? What can we expect to see from you next?

**GB:** I’m currently working towards a couple of exhibitions: one at Public Fiction in LA, one at Elizabeth Dee in New York, and one at Cell Project Space here in London, curated by Tobias Czudej.