

David Haines is very much an artist of our times and also of the here and now, for these are not quite the same, and maybe even opposites. He is an artist who lives in and through our world of endless virtualities, and turns them into images of his own dwelling amongst them; strange desires, fantasies and daydreams. Daydreams. It happens just before enunciation, the rest is just some work, working through ... He makes drawings, watercolours and videos; he uses pencils, brushes, words, sounds, melodies, voices, chewing gum and actors as if substances of this thought, as we come to see it.

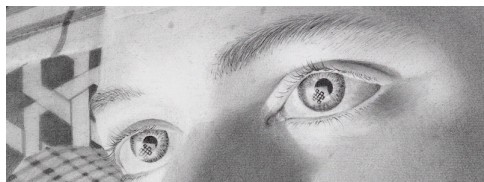
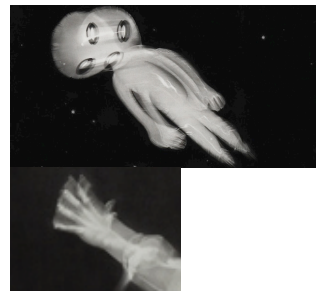
Yet he is also an artist who undoes what we call techniques and media, and in this his work is neither traditional nor is it experimental. It looks neither backward nor to the future. It invents an uncanny present even as, without regards for time, Haines calls on the imagery of the contemporary world like a Renaissance artist might once have called upon an emblem book, seeking for figures, dreamed worlds, and their potential in the making of a possible symbolic, a symbolic that might charm or be insufferable in its promised revelation.

So, in some respects, he is not at all an artist of our time.

Set before the daydream as a medium, our many virtualities are neither here nor there; just accidents on the edge of here-and-nowness. The daydream is also in the handwork, I suppose; I suppose that this is why – sometimes – the image makes no sense at all; the man, startling beauty as constructed as the dome that frames him, destroys the surface with his gaze beyond its sense ... undermines its work.

So the work is executed in a here and now of intensities; intensities of looking and of making, of making visible what he has seen in our world, what he has projected onto this world; intensities of how his inner life has taken form in images so that they and it belong to one another in a mutual and immense indifference. The great pleasure of his work is this: the making strange of the seen and of the movements of the artist's 'hand' in a single, endlessly protracted gesture made up of an almost microscopic scraping.

Yet: and this is where his things – I'm not sure what call them, figures? signifiers? things is safer, I can cover my tracks with the word things, as he can cover his paper with them; we can get closer like that. Yet: it's in the blur, in the smearing and the duplicitous repetition of one or another thing that preciseness contradicts itself as a term;



and this blur or smear is the form of clarity, more than the apparent illusion of something there, once photographed and even seen. Involved in the intense gaze that ignores us; elides us; or that rips the image.

Yet unlike the Renaissance painter he does not reassemble his emblems into a narrative, but puzzles us with his finding of them, his putting them in a frame together. Even when the ancient goddess Nike takes on the shape of a sneaker, to be sniffed, to be filled with

piss, or burned, or loved; even when She confronts Colonel Sanders in a wasteland of unimaginably detailed detritus and human waste that themselves wetly burn with desire, her name is nothing more than the involuntary weight of mythology in the contemporary. This is an art of actuality; it brings us news of feelings, images and the momentary relations that they make. It explains nothing, it is just the course of the world, of this world, which worlds itself here; nowhere else.

Haines' titles are neither an explanation nor a guide to how we might follow some hidden story in the image. For his works are **just** a measure of the density of what is seen, relics of past and present longed for as belonging to one another. Because Haines is lost in this world of traces, of individual desires left on the internet, in the *faits divers* of old newspapers, of anonymous boys performing to be seen by whoever will find them, he has to devise ways of showing them, these intensities of our new ways of daydreaming.

This '**just**' is everything, at once reticent and riotous, libidinous and withheld; Haines implodes what we once called medium. In his being lost he goes beyond the abject, the slimy, the evident or manifest situations of his work, towards some new and unexpected shaping of abstraction. His images are abstractions from something free from any binding in the literal, the ethical or the moral. In this they are a shape of happiness like the demons, angels and suffering mortals in the schemas of a Bosch.

In his video, his drawing and now his watercolour he pushes the realism of naming, of description, beyond the bounds of reason and into an insensate fascination with the totality of what he sees. Trying to repeat this world for us leads him to draw with a finesse that finesses hyper-realisms of the past, to make video and song works in which text, image and voice are so closely identified that we no longer know the difference between the seen and the heard. In his currently developing series of watercolours his brushwork is pushed to such a point of topographic detail that it looks like an assault on the received common sense and sensibility of the medium. In the drawings there is no drawing left, nothing more than the oily smear of graphite, something so indistinct, so free from chronology and topography, that is as if we can, now, see the unconscious

It's utterly unexpected. A chav boy smells his Nike through a gas mask tube, an roughly handsome face receives the light; the never-natural passage of desire, of being at a remove, recorded like a fact of nature in Dürer; or never-nature, not ethnography; another new nature of the once new nature of the modern city, of its night time skies and ruinous lighting, ruined gutters and monuments brought into a topology of common ruin.