



Paul Abbott & Alex Roberts
What Hat am I Wearing Today?

MOCA London

3 - 23 September 2017





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Paul Abbott and Alex Roberts' way of working exists between collaboration, chance, random encounter and continuous dialogue. Their exhibition *What Hat am I Wearing Today?* at MOCA London, suggests a reflection both of oneself and of the shifting roles we find ourselves enacting within society.

The multi-media installation explores the non-stable identity-reality of living and working in the second decade of the 21st century. It offers images of the everyday and passed by spectacle alongside fragments of intimate disclosure. The slogan on an ice cream van: *often licked, never beaten*; a tattooed- make up commuter caught in the glass of the S-Bahn; someone singing in the shower; a London resident's narration of his dreams and strategy for survival are all fleeting images and poetic anchors for our sense of belonging.

On entering the exhibition space, the viewer is confronted by Abbott's *Mute Witness/3rd Conditional*, a rack of t-shirts emblazoned with the word 'Wanker'. Perhaps it's a gesture of self-deprecation or simply a nod to a kind of uniform we may wear every day; same old shirt-same old me. Set against this is a series of Roberts' painting 'stills' or 'blanks,' such as *Colour Panel*. They might be flashes of light caught in her daily S-Bahn commute or swatches of industrial powder-coated colour typically found in the interiors of such trains.

This industrial focus is continued via an armature of metal tubing which physically joins the different element of the two artists' work. Acting both as a structural narrative tool and as an architectural and sculptural intervention of the space, its toughened, galvanised metal reminds us of the material around us that shapes and transports us through the everyday; from the home to work, to the bar and back home.

Humanity in the exhibition is materialised as fragments of narrative and spectacle in both Abbott's and Roberts' separate work. Displayed on small CRT monitors, Abbott's work *Past Perfect*, presents videoed insights of former students of his (he works as an English Language tutor.) Their hopes, dreams, fears become melded with narrations of a street preacher and Abbott himself singing in the shower. Roberts in contrast, presents in *Late Night Traveller* an image of a commuter on the S-Bahn, with her tattooed layers of ghoulish make-up staring at the viewer/artist. She is drawn to collected observations, snapshots of speculative instants and travellers from her journey's musings. The paintings are possible portrayals of our personal realities as we too chase our tails while trying to retain our identity within shifting political realities, financial pressures; everyday survival.

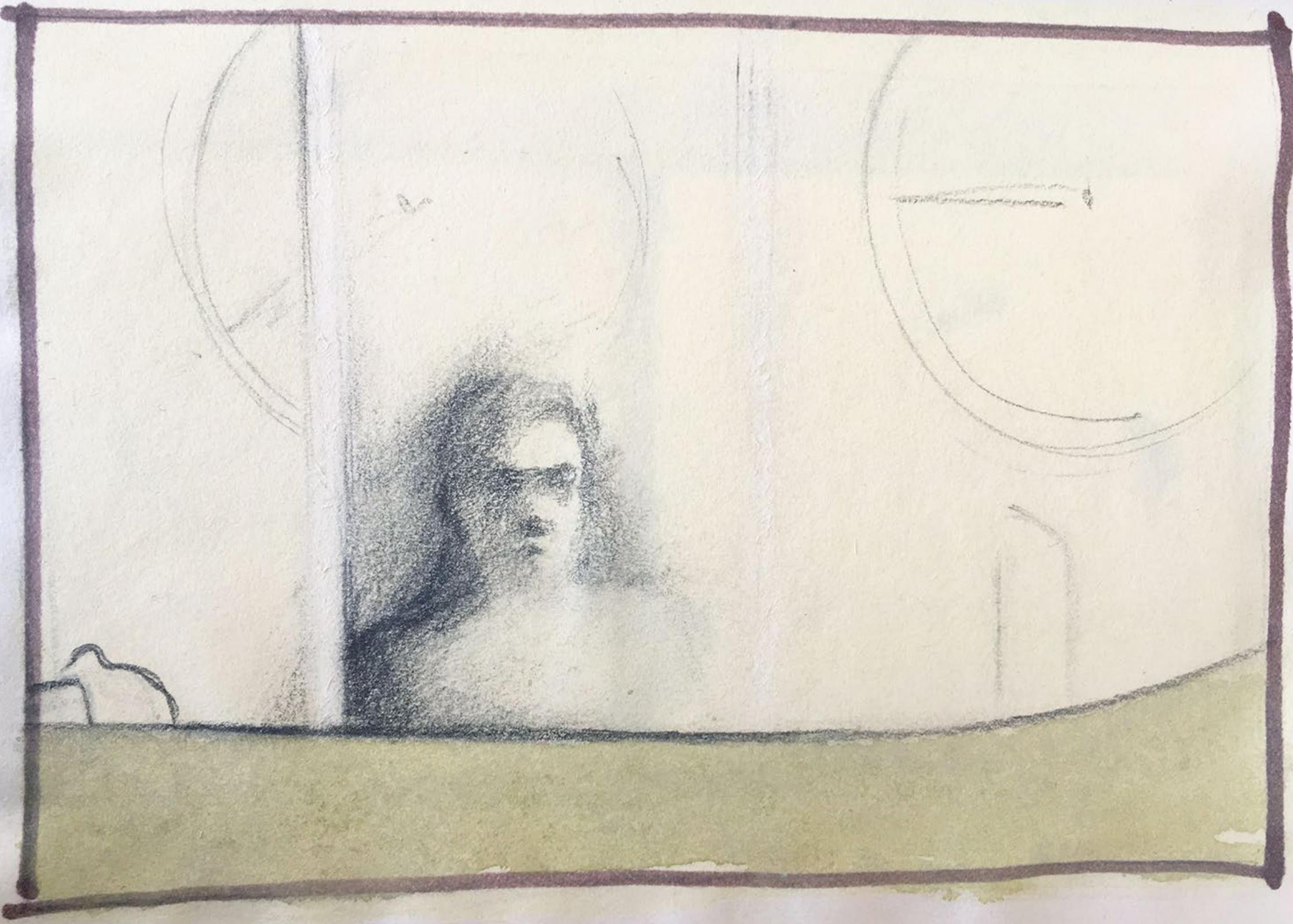
Abbott and Roberts are interested in process and the formal aspects of the individual and joint media they work with. From the play with paint, to a way of framing the camera; looking at the edge of things; observation in all forms. Site specificity is also key, and it should be noted that the install, as here for MOCA, is often the making of the work itself for both artists. The testing-trialing- exchanging of ideas; a shared discourse where the finalised work centres the viewer in making his/her own threads within and between the artists' separate elements.

What Hat am I Wearing Today? Has altered MOCA into fluctuation of identities; a pop-up clothing store, an exhibition space, a domestic room. It is both local and international in its narrative. It's about daily survival, banal daydreams, the durability of the individual, transient authorship, and questioning the pace of life.

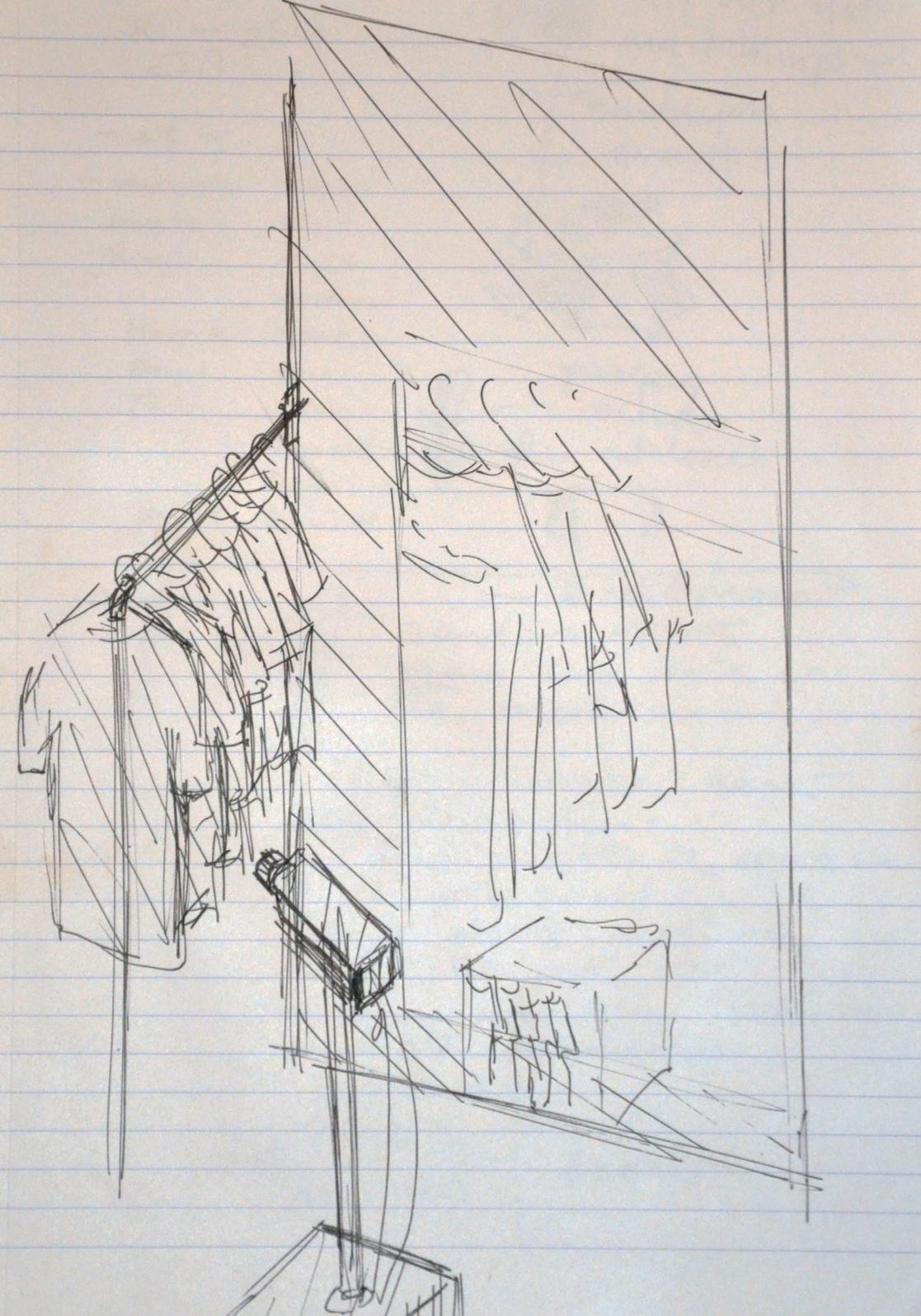
Abbott and Roberts are persons who span two cities, London and Berlin, where their multi-occupation, multi-nation existence may reflect the several hats we often wear as individuals to survive, sustain our identities. Abbott and Roberts have gathered several images to pause, perhaps re-address, even laugh at the means of survival that we might make just to be who we are.

The world is so unpredictable. Things happen suddenly, unexpectedly. We want to feel we are in control of our own existence. In some ways we are, in some ways we're not. We are ruled by the forces of chance and coincidence. Paul Auster









*if + subject +
had + past participle
+ subject +
would +
bare infinitive*

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Featured Pieces

Paul Abbott:

Mute Witness (Wanker), 1998. Cotton, ink, Dimensions variable. p. 4
Past Perfect, 2017. (Still) Multi-channel video/ sound installation. p. 6,10-11
Notebook Sketch, 2017. p.12
3rd Conditional/ Mixed (if I Could Turn Back Time xxx Cher), 2017. cotton, ink. Dimensions variable. p. 14-15, inside front cover
Audio Design and Mastering: Andy Taylor

Alex Roberts:

Reflective Stare 1, 2017. Pigment and oil on board, 30 x 35cm. Detail.
Image credit: Laurin Gutwin. front and back cover
Reflective Stare 2, 2017. Pigment and oil on board, 30 x 35cm. Detail.
Image credit: Laurin Gutwin. p. 2
Late Night Traveller, 2017. Pigment and oil on silk organza, 80 x 70cm.
Image credit: Laurin Gutwin. p.3, inside back cover (studio view)
Digital Collage, 2017. p.7
Sketchbook Image, 2017. p.8-9
Colour Panel, 2017. Pigment and oil on board, 22 x 20cm.
Image credit: Laurin Gutwin. p.13

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MOCA London
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