

Supersymmetry

Introduction Helen Stalker

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So much of the pain of loneliness is to do with concealment, with feeling compelled to hide vulnerability...

Olivia Laing, The Lonely City

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The Turnpike has always been a place for encounters. In 1971 this future focussed brutalist building landed on Leigh's former market square and launched with a major exhibition of sculpture by Henry Moore. Its existence began with the bold belief that as local industry sat precariously on the brink of decline, a space for meaningful connection with art and with each other, would unite and inspire a town's community. Almost fifty years later, the gallery looks virtually the same as it did when Moore's solid forms sat recumbent, hunched or sanguine between its columns. Now, with The Turnpike re-contextualised for a contemporary audience, this exhibition by Liam Fallon offers us a new perspective on what it is to be human.

Walking around *Supersymmetry* feels as perilous and thrilling as navigating a room full of potential relationships. Fallon's work at once persuades us to play and then pushes us off balance. We are invited to meet sculptures that are beautiful, comical and loaded with heartache. The works flit between clean brightness and a dense weight of longing. The persuasive power of Liam's work is astonishing.

So we thank Liam Fallon for making this compelling and confident exhibition for The Turnpike. It has been a delight to see his ideas bloom and sharpen towards the making of *Supersymmetry*. We are also grateful to the exhibition's curator Matt Retallick for not only initiating the project, but seeing it through to its full potential by teasing out ideas and sharing new thinking, and we also thank Brit Seaton and Katy Morrison who have responded with real insight and imagination in their writing. And thank you finally to Arts Council England for their support in realising this new body of work.

Matt Retallick "Untitled" (1991)

"Untitled" (1991)

I'm with Liam in his studio charting a path through our mutual influences, making sense of what the Turnpike exhibition will become through our shared art-historical and cultural connections. We thumb through a stack of earmarked books, printed essays and banks of images gathered from online excavations; turning his laptop towards me Liam explains "this is where it all started." On his screen is "Untitled" (1991), an artwork by Felix Gonzalez-Torres, a quiet black and white photograph of a bed, two pillows nestled side-by-side. Daylight emphasises the indentations of heads that were recently embraced, the sheets are creased and surely still warm, and for Liam this inconspicuous artwork distils the very essence of Supersymmetry, his exhibition title.

Put simply Supersymmetry is the theory that every type of particle has a partner, and "Untitled" (1991) is from a series of works by Gonzalez-Torres that adopt identical pairs; also included are clocks, mirrors and strings of light bulbs. Beds are perpetual signifiers of life, love and death, and this bed is no exception, the image at once encapsulates presence and absence, but sadly in this case absence is key. These pillows that suggest a romantic union are a photographic eulogy for Ross, Felix's long-term partner who died due to AIDS that year, a way of processing the devastation of losing the man he loved. They were first displayed throughout New York's Manhattan as a series of billboards, 24 of them in different locations in the borough, the number chosen because the 24th January was the day Ross died. Here the most everyday yet private is made uncompromisingly public. This was the bed of two gay men when AIDS was just a decade old; the image displayed in the year that the red ribbon was adopted as a symbol of AIDS awareness, and when Queen frontman Freddie Mercury very publicly died of AIDS related pneumonia. Displayed without text or slogan it didn't matter who saw the image, everyone could relate to it.

Liam's exhibition displays a series of newly conceived sculptures that are all about love and longing, loss, and the boundaries between public and private space. The love and tragedy of Felix and Ross is a single story in thousands of gay men whose lives exist in the chasm between private and public. It's often as small as feeling unable to hold hands, and as big as assuming a separate outward identity. Liam addresses this chasm directly seeking to make it visible, his sculptures may be playful, but the bold colours and comic-book outlines conceal a heartache and isolation. They are full of discreet signifiers, gestures that act as memoir, they are the doodles drawn in a margin, the furtive love note secretly passed; this is Supersymmetry, a sculptural testimony in the search for a perfect partner.

Matt Retallick is a curator and writer based in Manchester.

Kiss the nail on the head Brit Seaton

The other day, I came across an episode of my favourite podcast series that I'd previously missed. That hidden episode of *Hidden Brain* discusses the divided human brain, and how the two hemispheres have contrasting but interdependent roles. The show's guest, psychiatrist Iain McGilchrist, talks about his theory that the left side is concerned with details, the technical and logic, while the right is attributed to processing overviews and interconnections. He wrote a book about it a decade ago, titled *The Master and His Emissary*, likening the brain's hemispheres and their different roles to the characters in the parable: the pedantic left 'emissary' depends on the right's ability to oversee the bigger picture.

Liam told me that *Supersymmetry's* title is borrowed from a theory about every atom sharing identical properties with other atoms, like predetermined partners hoping and waiting to meet. The exhibition assembles physical relics of a journey through love and loss – of stuttered vocabulary about how it feels to find and lose symmetry with another. His monuments to romance and heartache straddle these strange polarities, not only through the supersymmetry of the self and a partner, but in the asymmetry of a singular mind. Liam's kitsch objects are the re-constructed details of a love story, the signifiers of how and where things happen: brick walls, belt buckles, a horse's saddle. But forming in a cluster, these artifacts of private sentimentality build up a landscape of vivid sensory echoes. They pulsate together, relaying a cartoon network of signals flashing, collating fact and fiction in a memory mausoleum.

The cracks are showing, but they're just a part of the form. With a system no longer nervous, the rebuilding of remembered fragments is a second chance to hit the nail on the head. The blueprints are brought back to life through rose-tinted glasses, and magnified. I'm not sure if we're being led down memory lane or a yellow brick road, stopping as we go past certain

landmarks of unknowable shared histories. The novelty is that the most sensitive parts of the story are preserved in transit. Left as they're found, these cerebral souvenirs become a meaning in the place itself. All over, the walls are marked with love and loss, though the site appears unchanged to oblivious eyes.

Brit Seaton is a writer and editor living and working in Mannheim, Germany.

In Any Given Moment

Katy Morrison

In any given moment,
an event happens.

A singular moment that is purposefully detached from everyday life
by virtue of some exceptional feature that calls attention to it.

Today, we bear witness to an event of emotional gesture unfolding.
We are presented with lived experience(s) gathered together.
These are moment(s) made monumental,
frozen expression(s) creating space,
holding us at a particular point of experience.

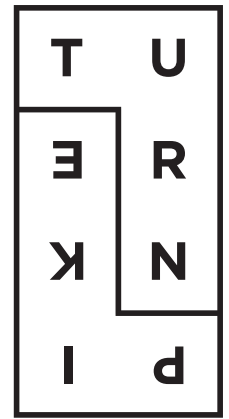
In any given moment,
This is theatrical, but not theatre.
Standing on a constructed stage,
being able to speak.
Isolating certain utterances,
a constant shift between the constative and the performative;
that which describes reality,
and that which produces it.
A mechanism of representation;
of meaning;
of sentimentality.
It is a subversive process of self-reflection;
lucid intervals of confrontation,
haunted by the possibility of a successful failure.

In any given moment,
It's architectonic, but not architecture.
It's the art of constructing systems;
a series of finely tuned reflections.
Unified forms bound to a certain space, time and gesture,
demanding an emotional and physical moment of encounter.

In any given moment,
It's performative, but not performance.
Bringing into perspective
the contingent and the elusive realm of impact and effect that art presents,
A dynamic and rhythmic rhetoric.
It structures encounter;
it shapes experience.
It allows us to think through;
A knowledge becoming.
A metamorphosis.

In any given moment,
It's sculptural, but not sculpture.
A poetic(s) of structure,
conceiving dimensions and objects of disclosure.
An inexhaustible tangle of fragile monuments;
ambiguous archives,
embracing relativities, conflicts, discontinuities.
A derangement of memory; an infinite conjunction.
A symbolic evocation of situations.
A complexity yearning to come out of seclusion,
Yet striving for disguise beneath the weight of its own metaphor.
Working to say without saying.
Leaving us to imagine their interaction,
to dream; to act.

In any given moment,
An event could happen.
A singular moment that is purposefully detached from everyday life,
and has the capacity the change everything,
again.



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