

ROYAL  
ACADEMY  
SCHOOLS

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*Show*

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2012

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ACADEMY  
SCHOOLS  
*Show*

2012

20 June 2012 - 01 July 2012  
10am - 6pm

Royal Academy Schools  
Royal Academy of Arts  
Burlington House  
Piccadilly  
London W1J 0BD

## RA Schools Sponsor's Statement

Congratulations to the 16 artists exhibiting at this End of Year Show. Completing your three years at the Royal Academy Schools is an honourable achievement. Newton Investment Management is delighted to sponsor the RA Schools as they continue an ambitious programme which rigorously questions what it means to be producing visual art in a modern world. We are pleased to have been able to play a part in process as a new chapter is added to the Schools' history and the possibilities of contemporary art making.

Helena Morrissey, CBE  
CEO, Newton Investment Management

## Foreword

The annual Schools Show marks the culmination of a remarkable three year experience, an opportunity for each of our students to discuss and develop their work within our studios and workshops – and to emerge as part of an exciting and diverse group of contemporary artists.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of staff at the Royal Academy Schools for their support during my first year as Keeper, and to extend my gratitude to the impressive rota of visitors to the Schools, who have also made valuable contributions to the course.

This publication represents our graduates' achievements so far; behind each image lies an impressive determination and commitment and I am proud to support them all.

Eileen Cooper RA  
Keeper of The Royal Academy of Arts

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The Power of Ideas

## *Double Indemnity*

There are many candidates for the leading idea or principle of modernity – the death of God, the arrival of the psychological subject, the development of global capitalism. But there are strong reasons for thinking that we became distinctively modern beings for the first time only with the development of insurance. One might object that this would put the beginnings of modernity back to the Code of Hammurabi of around 1772 BCE, which provided for merchants borrowing money to finance a shipment of goods to pay an extra sum in exchange for a guarantee to void their debt in the event of accident or theft. Indeed, perhaps all organisms of any kind can be thought of as mechanisms for ensuring that unlikely outcomes – the persistence of certain biochemical arrangements of matter over time, against a background of random comings and goings – will be more likely. Checking on the will of the Gods through recourse to oracles and haruspication can also be thought of as attempts to maximise good fortune and minimise bad.

But modern insurance only comes into being with the development of mathematical theories of probability, which may be dated, with surprising precision, to an exchange of letters in 1654 between Pascal and Fermat regarding the division of stakes in an interrupted game of chance. Insurance becomes possible only when it becomes possible to quantify risk, which is to say, when classical distinction between destiny, or the absolutely certain, and fortune, the absolutely unforeseeable, is blurred. Without the systematic reduction of uncertainty through the quantification of risk which may be described as banking on chance rather than hedging against it, almost nothing that characterises complex modern societies could maintain itself in being.

But far from taming or domesticating chance, the growing dominion of the principle of insurance has actually produced a retroactive intensification of the allure of ideas of contingency, chance and chaos. For centuries, under circumstances in which the conditions of life were radically uncertain, art had been firmly on the side of order, aligned with law, politics and faith. The growth of insurance creates a new vocation for art, which, from the beginning of the twentieth century onwards, has seen its role as assisting in the rescue of contingency from the administered world that is advancing so remorselessly upon it. Where art had once helped insure us against chaos, it has now pledged itself to providing a second indemnity, by insuring chaos against us.

A prime exhibit in this new confederacy of art and chance is Tristan Tzara's recipe for making a dadaist poem:

Take a newspaper.  
Take some scissors.  
Choose from this paper an article of the length you want to make your poem.  
Cut out the article.  
Next carefully cut out each of the words that makes up this article and put them all in a bag.  
Shake gently.  
Next take out each cutting one after the other.  
Copy conscientiously in the order in which they left the bag.  
The poem will resemble you.

The most immediately striking feature of this text is how much determination – in both senses, of strong intent and the specification of actions and effects – is threaded through its chance operations. To begin with, one must decide, or, rather, have already decided, how long the poem one wants to write must be. Even prior to that decision, one must evidently have already decided to write a poem, and a dadaist poem at that. One must choose one article, and take care to cut round each of the words in the article. The bag in which the words are to be re-ordered is to be shaken 'gently' – as though it might in some way invalidate the result, or compromise its chanciness, to agitate it too vigorously, thereby perhaps shaking it so far away from orderliness as to drive it all the way back to it. One must copy the poem out 'conscientiously', and must preserve the order in which the words have come out of the bag. Clearly, these are not the kinds of operation one should undertake in an absent-minded condition, or when there was the possibility of persons from Porlock barging in on the process.

Dadaism was only one of the areas of art practice that have become interested in trying to exploit or depend on the operations of chance. This is something different from simply playing the odds, in the way in which a gambler might, since a gambler only wins if he is lucky. The sort of betting on chance engaged in by Dada is of a kind such that, as long as the chance procedure is carefully-enough constructed and the mechanisms of the aleatory procedure followed to the letter, the player of the game cannot help but get lucky, since they will always and without fail be exposed to the operations of 'pure' chance.

If all goes well, we are assured, assurance here being of the essence, 'the poem will resemble you'. Is this supposed to be the triumphant consummation of the aleatory operation, or its hapless collapse? Perhaps Tzara is suggesting that the meticulous suspension of everything that might exert conscious influence over the operation will give access to the unconscious essence of the person doing the selection (this being a common promise made about chance operations in surrealism). But then perhaps he is simply pointing to the fact that, given the strict armature of the aleatory ritual, the resulting poem cannot help but end up as a portrait of the chancy artist, or the artist as chancer. Perhaps Tzara in fact means to intimate that the miraculous event of the poem will be the very opposite of a chance occurrence, precisely because it will have been so rigorously set up, and because the magical procedure mandates, as a matter not at all of chance, but of almost absolute necessity, that, whatever the result will be, it will be bound, or at least exceedingly likely, to come out looking like a spooky

miracle of aptness.

Tzara's recipe, which is usually quoted as though it were itself a poem, though, if so, it could not, by its own design specifications, be a dadaist one, is a reflection on the trickiness of achieving chance. Pure chance can only be guaranteed by strict determination, because 'chance' cannot be relied upon to happen by chance, the production of true randomness being exceedingly difficult. So 'mere' chance has a good chance of being impure, contaminated by unsuspected forms of determination. Chance, like death, is hard to avoid, until one resolves to embrace it, at which point, like death again, it has a way of becoming coyly elusive. Furthermore, Tzara's insurance policy seems to recognise that chance does not persist for long. Like ignorance, according to Lady Bracknell, chance is 'like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone'. The recipe intimates how difficult it is to cross over entirely on to the side of chance; seemingly, it is as hard to keep chance in one's poem as it is to keep it out.

The idea of the unconscious has often been recruited to the work of rescuing chance as such from the tenacious grip of probability theory. This is a redeeming of the subject from itself, insofar as the modern subject can be thought of as having been contaminated by rationality and prudential calculus, and the unconscious as a sort of private resource of randomness, immediately at hand. The powers of resistance and renewal embodied in 'the unconscious' depend upon a conception of chance as a kind of pure exteriority to reason, or to the reasoning subject. But chance is in fact never available as this kind of absolute exteriority, or in any sort of 'pure' form. Similarly, the art that would make chance an exterior force or fund on which to feed will always be liable to encounter the force of chance as part of its own operations, and intertwined with its most determined purposes.

The difficulty of achieving randomness means arises because it is always possible, by chance, that some disappointingly or suspiciously orderly arrangement might arise in any undetermined procedure. None of us would be very convinced if, in response to the request to provide a sequence of 6 numbers at random, a programme were to generate the sequence 123456, but there is quite a significant chance of such a sequence arising at random. If it were really random, the shuffle programme on the iPod would play the same song twice or even three times in succession often enough for it to have happened at least to somebody you know. But it doesn't, because the shuffling is in fact loaded in certain ways. As a sometime historian of and speculator on the voice, I have had occasion to enjoy and endure a number of episodes or performances of glossolalia, both in artistic and religious contexts, in which sounds are emitted that are said to be pure nonsensical utterance, or at least to belong to no recognisable language. The interesting feature of such utterances is that, far from being driven by the pure language of the spirit, or of the elemental passions, they always in fact seem to be subject to vigilant internal monitoring, so as to avoid the accidental articulation of meaningful words. Given that many of these words arise from the crystallisation of accident out of the mouths of babes and sucklings in many different times and climes, it is highly improbable that an entirely unfiltered stream of spontaneous utterance would not occasionally contain them, yet I have never heard a glossolalic performer come close to articulating the words 'mummy' or 'plop' or 'bugger' or 'haddock'. In order to count as entirely open, such speech cannot be open to simply anything and everything. The order of accident must be carefully insured against the accident of order. Seen in these terms, the ideology of chance may be seen as the effort to disavow this intermingling of the determinate and the indeterminate – an intermingling that can never itself

be fully determinate. What we may as well call the aleator, or artist of chance, is therefore the mirror image of the determinist; where the latter strives to leave nothing to chance, the former is at pains to have absolutely nothing go to plan.

By staking its prestige on chance, art is of course giving up its traditional claim to distinctiveness, namely that it was part of the human endeavour to create order, or, not precisely the same thing, reduce entropy in a noisily chaotic and unpredictable world. Going over to the side of what might seem most toxic to its endeavours, art in fact predictably seeks to secure its own distinctiveness, with the suggestion that it has unique powers to open up life-giving and generative zones of exception in a remorselessly second-guessed and calculated world. But this elective identification between art and chance is in fact understandable as another way of taming chance, in Ian Hacking's phrase, of gaining indefinitely from it, of banking upon it. The desire to embrace chance is always an illusory and in its way authoritarian dream, since it disavows the recognition that chance always has you partly in its grip.

This is not to say that art is merely mistaken in trying so magnanimously to suspend its own powers in favour of chance processes, for art, like sport, gambling, the stock market and almost everything else, does certainly provide the opportunity to engineer interesting kinds of transaction with chance. But these transactions must always be engineered, so that the very means that art must adopt to exempt itself from the powers of modern insurance succeed only in extending and ramifying its reach. Art has become a way of ensuring that chance can never be left to chance.

*Steven Connor is Professor of Modern Literature and Theory at Birkbeck, University of London and Academic Director of the London Consortium Graduate Programme. His most recent books are Paraphernalia: The Curious Lives of Magical Things (2011) and A Philosophy of Sport (2011). His website at [www.stevenconnor.com](http://www.stevenconnor.com) makes available many unpublished texts and broadcasts.*

*We Build Our Time.*  
*An Annotated Love letter (2).*

To you,

I can't write anymore. Your monologue does not permit me the pleasure to lay brick by brick word for word a building—like the collaborative construction you speak of.

The only way I can bring myself to write is to do so in an email. So I copy and paste from my mailbox in order to relieve the formality. I write here for you, and to myself in order to interrupt your monologue that you say I invite with silence.

Did you read of the sirens and Ulysses'<sup>1</sup> faith in silence? That chained to a mast, with putty-fingered wax pressed into his ears, he avoided those deadly seductions. And fastened there, with muffled hearing he could watch the rolling ocean unaware of when the singing of the sirens begun or ended. Content and protected in his own head, he swayed with the sea without an audible diversion.

You talk of our superficial relationship. Using each other as material to build a form on which to stand upon and look down at others from a far? A kind of vertigo of kinship you said. Yet, you never talk about what that kinship is or how it acts? 'A tool' they would say I suppose. Can you not bring yourself to describe it?

The intimacy you describe never existed. My spine would not rest upon your stomach. It did not fit as you said it did. You imagine closeness so vividly with your poetry, your words and your seductions. You talk about the body but you do not mention its history—our history. You would call it 'a social history of our eroticism'<sup>2</sup>. Like an essay title you would propose to a friend one night somewhere dark. But why use words so quiet to touch me and to imagine so clearly these physical associations? Is it because you manifest your dearest ambitions safe in your mind without knowledge or witness to their exhibition? The delicate touch you describe, like Ulysses' puttied wax-finger marks and prints of thumbs pressed, cease to be anything more than prose. Spare me this distance.

You talk of discontent? Should there be? Did you watch me through the blinds? As I brushed my hair slowly, sitting in your perfectly described interior?<sup>3</sup> What did you want from me? Were you jealous of me, of him, or the blinds themselves? A triangle of surveillance? Jealousy you say. But, I see only light shining through a grill—invisible beams falling on crumpled sheets.

You suggest we acted like objects yet we never agreed on their form. You say our charade was inert and that we were thoughtless and senseless like objects. But where's the weight in your words?<sup>4</sup> You talk of objects and their roguish insensitivity but what of that sound we heard when the rock fell from the cliff in the bay on the north east coast—the erasure of pencil drawn statehood sounding like a thunderclap in your stomach<sup>5</sup>. And sitting beside the rock once it had found its peace, you said rather pretentiously, if I remember: do not think about the rock and its history—just lean back against it.

You watched him talk for hours. You said it was his life work, the piece that would promote his status from here to there and you said it was never completed. So those trials you rhapsodized so fondly of, those takes with clapperboard sharpness—why was this unfinished process so resonant for you? Just another person's words meandering in your head like a seaside town, shrieking like the gulls in spring, angry with the same protectionism you accused of our embrace.

Was this also an excuse for words to be shared out loud in a bare room, full of listening objects, clanking and clapping like boulders from above, precariously drawing the boundaries of established relations? You used the word 'trust' that we never talked about. Like love or nostalgia—dirty words in these places, words for work<sup>6</sup> like those you seem to negate in your inwardness.

Yours,

With love.

<sup>1</sup> You should be clearer regarding how you intend to frame ignorance. Following Franz Kafka's *The Silence of the Sirens* (1933) this muting act that you describe is 'Proof that even childish measures may serve to rescue one from peril'—therefore, are you asserting a productive process of blind ignorance through play? If so, do you want this to resonate in your depiction of a tangled love affair? To what aim?

<sup>2</sup> Are you referring here to bodily processes of production, and their visibility? Think about Kurt Schwitters' *Cathedral of Erotic Misery* as an internalized intimate process of ongoing making and its eventual public presence re-constructed in *The Sprengel Museum*, Hanover. Schwitters referred to different elements of his architectural collage in relation to organs—a very intimate bodily production, yet its final re-constructed resting point was highly institutionalized and socially constructed via a multiplicity of external voices. You could go further asserting the private and public displays of this 'eroticism'? See: *I Build My Time: columns, grottos, niches: a collage built on texts by Kurt Schwitters by Klaus Stadtmüller* (2001).

<sup>3</sup> You need to think further about the position of the reader here—you seem to assume the reader follows your private associations, you can afford to be more overt with your assertions. If you are interested in

how this practice becomes a repeating process that re-witnesses the same event—explain this further. For example: if 'He' (the named character in the narrative) is seeing something—so too is the reader, therefore there is a simultaneous surveillance of objects, actions, gestures etc. See Alain Robbe-Grillet's *Jealousy* (1957): 'The brush descends the length of the loose hair with a faint noise something between the sound of a breath and a crackle. No sooner has it reached the bottom than it quickly rises again towards the head, where the whole surface of its bristles sinks in before gliding down over the black mass again. The brush is a bone-coloured oval whose short handle disappears almost entirely in the hand firmly gripping it.'

<sup>4</sup> In relation to the idea of a weight of words, where you assign an alternative material value to discourse, you could consider the weight or materiality of another symbolic order—hidden codes embedded in Literature? Could these be assigned a similar material value somehow? See Quentin Meillassoux's *The Number and the Siren* (2012) for a recent analysis of the hidden code in Mallarmé's *Coup De Des* (A Throw of Dice). Meillassoux proposes that it is not the encryption itself that will offer a 'key' to interpret the work but 'rather the form of its unsuspected lock: not the revelation of its true meaning, but the making explicit of a heretofore invisible difficulty.' In this sense the knowledge of the presence of a code running through the work acts as an additional layer or material to obfuscate, thus 'cloaking itself in unsuspecting shadows'. In more general terms, are you trying to unlock a material code for the interpretation of love? Is this possible, or are you just presenting a system that further shrouds any understanding of the relations that you describe?

<sup>5</sup> Have you considered the body as a hearing vessel? Rather than thinking specifically about territorial mappings and eroding coastlines you could think about how and where this meaning resonates as a subject. See Jean-Luc Nancy's *Listening* (2007): '—to treat the body, before any distinction of places and functions of resonance, as being, wholly (and "without organs"), a resonance chamber or column of beyond meaning (its "soul," as we say of the barrel of a cannon, or of the part of the violin that transmits vibrations between the sounding board and the back, or else of the little hole in the clarinet...);—and from there, to envisage the "subject" as that part, in the body, that is listening or vibrates with listening to—or with the echo of—the beyond-meaning.

<sup>6</sup> You could expand upon this reference? At this point it might be worth examining different translations for the term 'love'. I understand that Søren Kierkegaard for example, in his *Works of Love* (1847) describes 'love' (kjerlighed) as a work, an act or a task, while also proposing love as the ground from which to 'build' (opbygge), but does your text function as a similar foundation? If so what do you intend to construct?

*Jesse Ash is an artist making work in a variety of media considering ideas about language, the dissemination of political ideology and the authorities of speech, published text and journalism. Ash completed his PhD at Goldsmiths College, London in 2010 and received his MA in Painting at the RCA, London in 2003.*

*<http://www.monitoronline.org/>  
<http://www.tulipsandroses.lt/>*





Adele Morse





Luey Graves

*Cave*  
Ink, gouache and oil on mahogany  
panel  
50 x 58 cm



DON'T KNOCK.  
JUST WAIT!  
RECORDING  
IN PROGRESS!







*Mimicry-cry*  
 Monoprint on Okawara  
 paper  
 151cm x 97cm

Lewis Betts



*Blue Sunflower*  
 Monoprint on Okawara  
 paper  
 151cm x 97cm



Toby Christian

*Blood Orange*  
Gouache on tissue paper  
23 x 21 cm



Chris Mew

*No. II*  
Mixed media on canvas  
177 x 390 cm



Sonja Weissman

*There is an Hour just at Evening when the Plain seems  
to be on the verge of saying something; it never does.*  
Egg tempera on Canvas  
102 x 102 cm

*A photograph of my father and a family  
friend posing in front of an official portrait  
of Ferdinand Marcos*





Anna Salamon

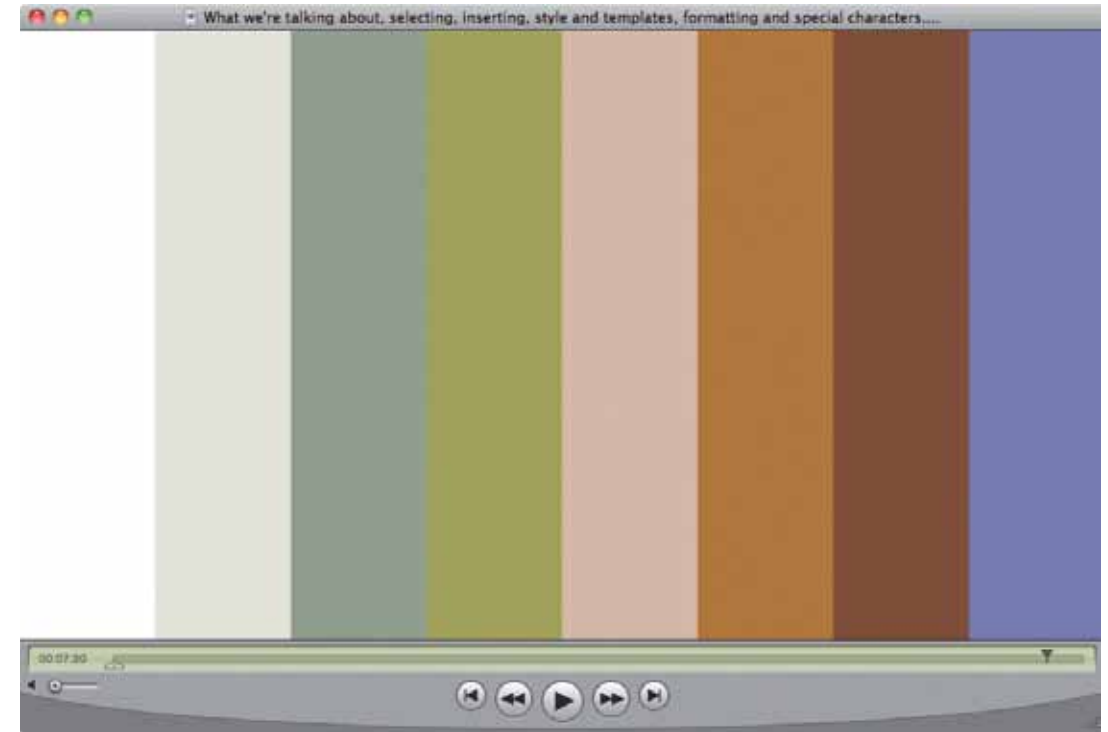
*Prequel I*  
Acrylic, emulsion, relief ink and  
archival tissue on wall



Archie Franks

*Object*  
Oil on canvas  
61 x 45.7 cm







John Robertson

*Once twice (ONCE ONCE)*  
48 x 42 cm  
oil on polythene

Christopher McSherry









*Apocalypse in fragments (After AD 1511) No. 1*  
Woodcut monoprint and pencil on reverse  
120 x 90 cm







Sikelela Owen

*Blue Blanket*  
Oil on canvas paper  
21 x 29.7 cm



*Study of Alliyah*  
Oil on canvas paper  
29.7 x 21 cm



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