

Satellites Programme  
France-Lise McGurn  
3am

11.07.15 – 30.08.15

Collective is delighted to present *3am* a new exhibition by Glasgow based artist France-Lise McGurn, developed as part of Satellites Programme 2015.

France-Lise McGurn's practice is informed by a non-indexical archive of materials collected from advertisements, poster campaigns, club flyers and other printed ephemera designed for mass dissemination. These written and visual documents range from recent French language textbooks, graphics from *Le Petit Marseillais* shower gel and public health posters warning soldiers and sailors in 1940s Europe of the dangers of venereal disease. The archive also includes numerous discrete and personal forms of language including handwritten notes and sketches. Inspired by graphology – the pseudoscientific analysis of handwriting – France-Lise is interested in the potential connotations of gender and sexuality in the written and drawn line.

In *3am* France-Lise works across painting, drawing, sculpture and sound to explore language and the performance of identity. A sound work plays outside of the gallery onto Calton Hill much like a loudspeaker broadcasting announcements in a train station or the sound spill of club music in a smoking area. Made using software that replicates the human voice, this work is inspired by recordings of castrato voices. The paintings and sculptural arrangements in the gallery draw on her informal archive, never replicating specific images but appropriating gestures, motifs and devices such as the sailor or soldier, to become a form of shorthand that scores the exhibition space.

# COLLECTIVE

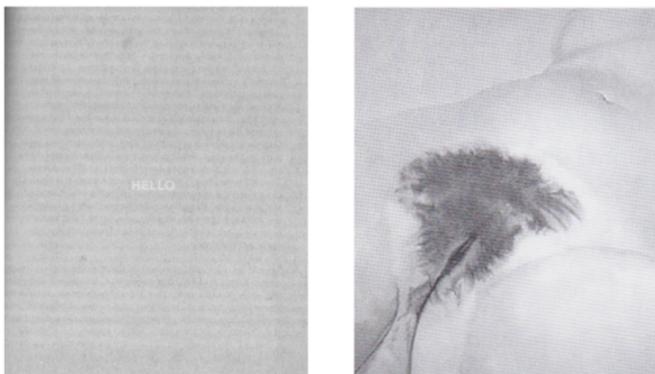
France-Lise McGurn lives and works in Glasgow. She graduated with an MA from The Royal College of Art in 2012. In 2014 she exhibited in *The White Hotel*, Gimpel Fils, London, and *Nos Algae's*, a performance at Tramway, Glasgow, as part of Generation. She was part of a collaborative performance titled *Amygdala N.O.S* with Kimberley O'Neill and Cara Tolmie at South London Gallery in May 2015, for the launch of *Love your Parasites*, edited by Camilla Wills.



## Now We're Here Georgia Horgan

The series of paintings *Index: Now They Are*, produced by artist group Art & Language in the early nineties, consists of fifteen canvases of various sizes each overlaid with a sheet of glass painted fleshy pink. The paintings appear to be blank, in the style of high-genre late modernist paintings. In the centre, barely discernable, is the word HELLO.

Beneath the glass is a reproduction of a section of *L'Origine du monde*, French painter Courbet's bawdy reclining nude. Art & Language became interested in the image due to its historical associations with literal concealment. First commissioned in 1866 by Turkish diplomat Khalil-Bey, it was displayed in his home behind a green veil. Later, during its time hung on the wall in psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan's study, it was hidden behind a specially commissioned painting made by artist André Masson.



Left: unglazed image. Right: Art & Language, *Index XX: Now They Are*, oil on canvas on wood with enamel on glass, 231x190.5cm, 1992.

What happens when these two loaded symbols from art history collide? Do they reveal the 'masculine heavy breathing' of the conventions of the high-modernist monochrome painting and the dehumanized nude? Does this encounter reveal the repressed sexuality of modernism? Is the block of colour erasing gender or is gender breaking through?

In reality, none of these things are happening. There is no dialectical resolution between modernism and gender politics on offer from *Index: Now They Are*<sup>1</sup>. As the viewer struggles to make out the images beneath the fleshy glass, seeing nothing but themselves reflected in neo-classical beige, a voyeuristic and unresolved encounter occurs. The infuriating inscription HELLO implies a figure, giving the solid pink rectangle a head, yet the words mean almost nothing, implying only a banal and non-specific greeting. What is actually produced is Art & Language's on-going preoccupation with destabilising the plane across which the visual and the verbal are demarcated.

Groping at the frustrations and instabilities of language is at the centre of France-Lise McGurn's practice. In the installation *3am*, ageless, androgynous figures from French language textbooks act out ambiguous tasks or occupations, their poses substantiating their meaning as insufficiently as the shapes of the letters that compose the words they are substituting.

To give a more lucid example, in French, the letter 'h' is often considered to be feminine.

Therefore, by association, the inanimate, abstract and apparently neuter noun rhythm, the French for rhythm, has a dimension of femininity because of its 'h' and to a certain extent its 'e', despite its usual categorisation as masculine. This is a frail and senseless connection, very much in the same way that a goofy cartoon from a textbook lying flat on its sexless back can be a proper expression of the irregular verb mourir, to die.

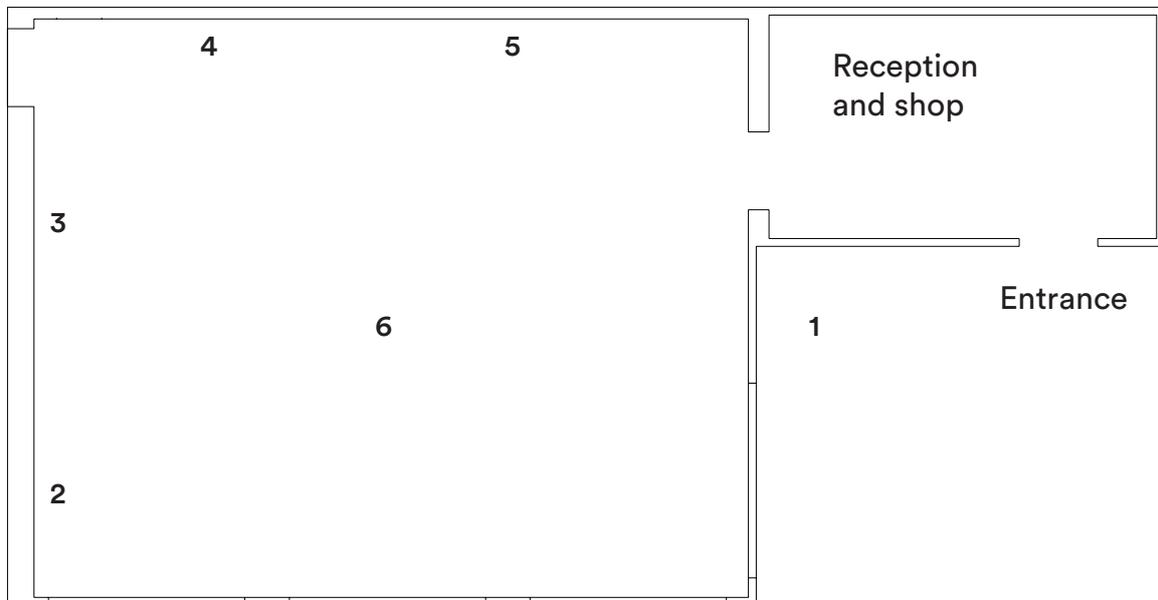
Within the context of the installation, these marks act as a type of pictorial notation, or gestural shorthand constructing a space. They behave like evidence in an apartment that suggests there was a party there the night before – a phone number jotted on a wall, or a cigarette burn in a carpet. However, like the shapes of words, these signals will never fully embody or reveal every conversation, or song, or situation that happened there that night.

While three men from Coventry patrol the parameters of 'Modernism's nervous breakdown'<sup>2</sup>, France-Lise's practice utilises a visual vocabulary that more explicitly addresses the condition of language – not merely as shapes and symbols that we recognize as forming meaning – but as communication, and the smoke screens between us. The gestural lines and lumpy stookies inscribe the space with the sense of vulnerability that comes with attempting to fully comprehend a situation, a place, or person, what happened at the party, or where to go from here.

Georgia Horgan lives and works in Glasgow and graduated from Glasgow School of Art in 2013. Recent exhibition include: *Early Modern Administrative Machine*, a solo exhibition at WASPS Studios, Dundee, 2014, and *Fold Up Snap On*, a group show at The Pipe Factory, Glasgow, as part of Glasgow International 2014. Georgia was an Associate Producer at Collective and has been commissioned to develop texts for each of the solo presentation as part of Satellites Programme 2015.

#### Endnotes

1. This analysis of gender in *Index: Now We Are*, was originally proposed by Steve Edwards in "Art & Language's Doubt" from C.Harrison, ed., *Art & Language in Practice*, vol. 2, Barcelona: Fundació Antoni Tàpies, 1999, p.252.
2. Mel Ramsden's description of Conceptual Art, in "The Trouble with Writing" from C. Harrison, *Conceptual Art and Painting: Further Essays on Art and Language*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2001, p.27.



1. *Savon*, sound work, 2015.
2. *Oysters(m)*, oil on canvas, 124×150cm, 2015.
3. *Men are from Mars(eille)*, acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 122×91cm, 2015.
4. *Grown Up*, oil on canvas, 66×60cm, 2015.
5. *Syph*, acrylic on canvas, 91×122cm, 2015.
6. *Leggs and co.*, modroc, electrical cable, faux suede, with poppy boxes, cut vinyl and gloss paint, 2015.

**3am** is part of Satellites Programme, Collective's development programme for emergent artists based in Scotland. Satellites Programme 2015 includes four solo-presentations by selected artists Thomas Aitchison, France-Lise McGurn, Scott Rogers and Hardeep Pandhal and one project by Associate Producer, Georgia Horgan. The programme is specifically developed to facilitate artists at this pivotal point in their career through peer review, professional development, mentoring, exhibitions and events.

**Collective** is a contemporary visual art organisation that delivers an exciting and ambitious programme of exhibitions, new commissions, events and off-site projects. Collective produces major new work by Scotland based and international artists who are at a pivotal stage in their development.

Funded by:



Part of:



Sponsored by:

