

Published on the occasion of the residency (15 March ~ 1 April) and exhibition (2 ~ 11 April) at Permanent, by Max Mosscrop, 2010.

Max Mosscrop spent ten days over three weeks experimenting with presenting and curating his works in response to Permanent's ground floor Victorian townhouse space.

The writer and curator Roy Exley visited the gallery twice during this period to discuss Max's work with him and develop a piece of writing. The resulting text is published here, alongside photographs of the exhibition evolution taken by Max and Permanent staff. The writings of Roy Exley have been published by Flash Art, Aperture and Portfolio. Exley teaches at The Rudolf Steiner School, Brighton.

Max Mosscrop is a painter-sculptor who trained as an architect, before going on to study at The Royal Academy of Arts, where he graduated from in 1997. Recent group exhibitions include Reconstructing the Old House at The Nunnery Gallery, London, April 2009, which then toured to the Ruskin Gallery, Cambridge, October 2009, and Cortez Arrives, Herbert Read Gallery, Canterbury, March ~ April 2009. He had a recent solo show at Five Years Gallery, London, January 2010.

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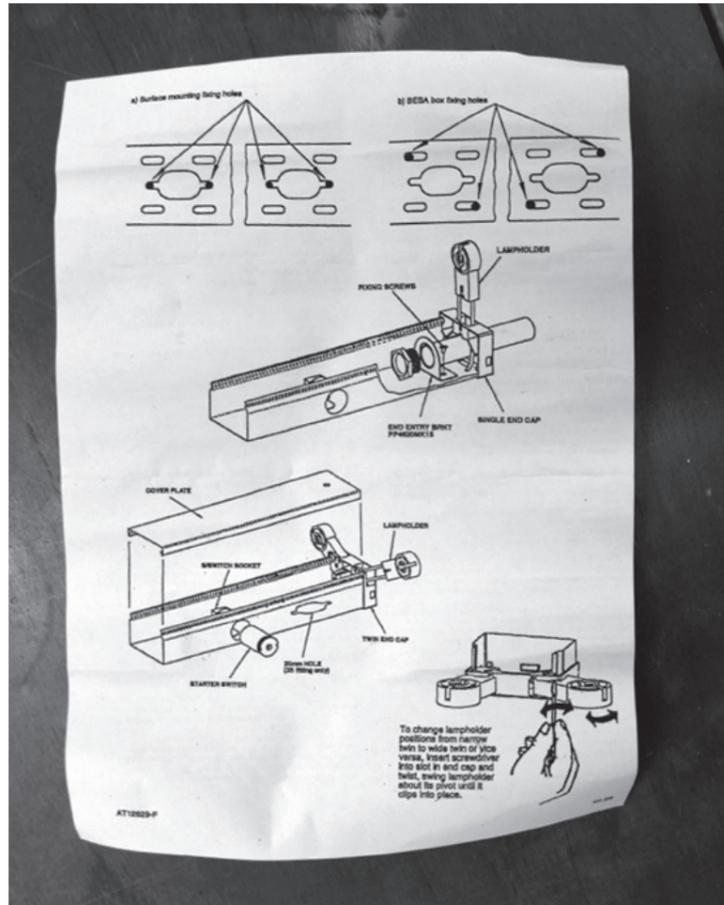
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ISBN 978-1-85721-405-5

This is the first in a series of booklets published to accompany Platform X, five modest residencies taking place at Permanent between March and September, 2010. For each residency an artist or group will be given use of the gallery space to develop and present an exhibition, performance, event or other public outcome. Platform X enables a process of intensive experimentation and development, towards an exhibition or event.











CHROMATAGORIA

MAX MOSSCROP'S ADVENTURES WITH COLOUR

The world of colour has a permutational infinity so where do you tap into its diverse riches? One way of exploring its infinity, its rich diversity, is through an engagement with serendipity. All these 'ity's' bring to mind 'lickety split' — and indeed delving into randomness can involve an element of speed — surfing the moment can be scary, but Max Mosscrop makes it look routine. His agenda in looking at the interrelationships between colour and form is firmly, but paradoxically, randomly, rooted in the world of the aleatory — a wobbly region, 'par excellence' — to gain access to the unpredictability of serendipity. There is, however, a strange contradiction in all this in that an armature is required to support this wobbly and wayward spontaneity, a fixed field upon which the colours and forms can play and morph — a playing field upon which the goalposts are allowed to continually shift.

Cross medieval techniques with neo-modernist aleatory wanderings, and you might begin to spot Mosscrop dinking about, elevated — but only just — above a distant horizon. A gesso ground gives his particular playing field a firm-footing - everything needs at least a modicum of constancy and for Mosscrop this is it — everything else over and above this rectangular field — sometimes two sided, sometimes six — is in free-form mode, refusing to conform to any sort of norm. The swathes, wedges and splinters of watercolour are illusory, they have no permanence, their ontology is

on a dodgy, water-soluble footing. Permanence is, of course, relative, but most of all, it's boring. Mosscrop is having none of this, mutation is something that, by its very nature, refuses to be grabbed and fixed, so be it, and let's experience this fact as we immerse ourselves in the rich diversity of Mosscrop's painted objects — slim boxes coated with crisply matt layers of gesso, adorned (not decorated), by delinquent wedges, lozenges, splinters and trapezii of colour. The striking contradictions between the methodical and exacting technique of achieving a uniform gesso surface on a plain ground and the trespass on that hallowed ground of the aleatorical meanderings of dots haphazardly directing the flow of their coloured interstices does a similar service to spontaneity as did William Burroughs' cut-up technique to the printed word. This is launching into an adventure ducking and diving beneath any influence of agenda or itinerary.

Indeterminacy and chance are blood brothers, and furthermore they're rebels, they have no place in the negotiations of capitalist commerce, they're not in hock to the world of finance, enterprise, greed or gain. They're not in hock to anything allied to materialism; in fact they're driving in the opposite direction, a blur on the radar of reason. They are the engine of the unorthodox and unpredictable vehicle that Mosscrop drives, if you can call it driving - does a rodeo cowboy really ride? Aiming

a streamlined, aerodynamic wedge, between the forces of commerce and reason. Robert and Sonia Delaunay, Andreas Feininger, Giorgio de Chirico, Frank Stella, Elsworth Kelly, the potential references here are many but they count for nothing, Mosscrop is freewheeling between and around any conventions, viewers can apply their own spin, weave their own associations around these works, but ultimately their singular presence is in accord with Reception Theory, they mean something different and unique to each individual viewer. Their objecthood is key, his paintings with six sides can stand free, like sculptures, and indeed they test the boundaries of what we might call sculpture and what we might call paintings, once again the viewer becomes arbiter. Mosscrop adroitly navigates his way around those determinist pigeon-holes that lurk, waiting to swallow whole, and ingest, the unwary artist. What matters the analytical morphology of a wave as we career down its face on our surfboard?

The two-dimensionality of a coloured surface can, with a few deft tweaks, offer the illusion of a three-dimensional image — but Mosscrop offers both optical outcomes at the same time — bright and flat little coloured lozenges or wedges cluster together to form crystals or protozoic viral forms that float in some sort of aqueous humour, like the 'floaters' in the eye that perceives them, sustaining the impression of some miniature nanomorph world that science hasn't

yet discovered. With the Gestalt blink of an eye we're back to a constellation of flat jostling colours — the expressions of some esoteric colour exercise.

Aleatorical, serendipitous, aoristic, indeterminate, are descriptions that could easily lead, if used as paradigms for the creative act, to accusations of courting vagueness or of being deliberately elusive, but this would be missing the point as it's the process, not the product, that calls the tune here — experimentation and exploration by their very nature have an open-ended agenda, otherwise there would be no progress, we would just create circles within circles. To break out from the formulaic, the prescriptive, is like continually being reborn, with all the awe and revelation that such an experience brings, creating the dynamic that keeps creativity fresh and vital. Contingency, like determinacy, is a heavy cloak that engulfs and smothers creativity, denying it the life-giving air, light and space that its sustenance demands. The luxury of casting off that cloak is permitted to few in the mad fervour that is the hegemony of capitalism. Maybe as a homage to Max's own use of a dice in his serendipitous process of creation, we should in turn use a dice to decide in what order to view these works.

Roy Exley
Writer and curator