

fig-2 loyalty card

fig-2: a new art exhibition every week for 2015 (aj dehany's attempt to visit all 50 weeks)

Week 28 – Patrick Coyle & Francesco Pedraglio – 13-19 July



Fig-2 is famous for its collaborations. The project itself is a direct collaboration with each week's artist where the artist and curators work closely to craft a seven-day show. Several of the weeks have also featured two or more featured artists in collaboration, and Week 28 was a collaboration between Patrick

Coyle and Francesco Pedraglio. They both do a lot of spoken word performance and their show played brilliantly with interactions and slippages between the physical and the verbal.



The studio space was set out in a backwards S shape demarcated by the free-standing panels. On the front of these, Francesco's black vinyl strips were laid out like mazes. Within the back were disparate objects collected by Patrick. Around the space everything was lilac or purple. Ground acai and acai berries,

meths in a Dewars miniature, Winsor and Newton galeria Acrylic (purple), random purple markings, a lilac gas canister, purple cups, purple staining. It's like Prince had a loft clearout.

Throughout fig-2 we have seen the six skylights of the ICA studio space closed



off or opened to light, given colourful gels, and with this week they found a new look. One of the skylights has at some point been stepped on and it's concave rather than convex, so it's like a sky pond. Patrick filled it with purple water and put in weird objects, some of which over the week went mouldy, some solidified,

some returned to liquid.



This is reminiscent of Jacopo Miliani's Week 16 in which the artist brought in flowers every day but left them without water so over the week they faded away, presenting in physical form an illustration of time, which is such an all-pervasive notion in fig-2 with its radically curtailed exhibition times and rigid lengths.



Just as Miliani presented space as a choreographic score, here the studio space contained the raw physical ingredients that would go into the word soup of a half hour performance. The pair took it in turns to 'read'. Francesco delivered a memorised poem three times, delivered almost slickly, with Patrick reading his

speeches about purple, the mating habits of cedillas, the acai, the acaiphabet, the lab goo. All of these things were drawn into a verbal texture during the performance that magically transformed words and ideas into new ones.

Purgatorio de l'inferno is a long poem by Genoese avant-garde poet and playwright Edoardo Sanguineti which is kind of a Marxist response to the Divine Comedy of Dante. Francesco read, retranslated and reinterpreted Sanguineti's tenth canto, a section I read as a warning to the Damned about

materialism.



It is in three short stanzas. In the first we see the cat in boots, the peace of Barcelona, the locomotive, the peach blossom, the seahorse, and “if you turn the page, you see the money”. We see Jupiter’s moons, the sun’s journey, the checkerboard, Latin literature, shoes, the school of Athens, butter, a postcard from

Finland, the masseter muscle, and childbirth, and “if you turn the page, you see the money.” The last section is ironic: we see the generals with their machine guns, graveyards and graves, savings banks, security, history books full of history, and then when you turn this page, “you see nothing.”



Francesco presented his own translation of this three-part poem three times, each time gathering subtle variations and additions (the Arab Spring, spring break, the first day of spring, as well as socks, pillows, headaches, phone bills, and kebabs after a drunken night) concluding the whole performance with the

original Italian. For each thing that Sanguineti’s poem lists, Francesco called it into being through the performance, through the imaginative act of saying it into being. The vinyl strips on the walls reconfigured themselves into *signifiers* that represented like a new language, a neologism, the *signifieds* of the poem.



By the act of naming, objects are charged with symbolic value. Francesco used the tape as well as red window blinds, lightbulbs, stones, in each case claiming that they represented the postcard from Finland, or the peach blossom or the Peace of Barcelona. This is magical.

Literally the essence of magic. The magician tells us that the assistant has been cut in half and we are prepared to accept it, to countenance a new reality imaginatively.



Similarly, we take on trust the signification of words during translation, that *this* means *that*. There's every possibility we could be misled, as happens in the Hungarian Phrasebook Sketch where a prank language book misleads Hungarians. But if we so chose we could accept these alternative meanings, that "My

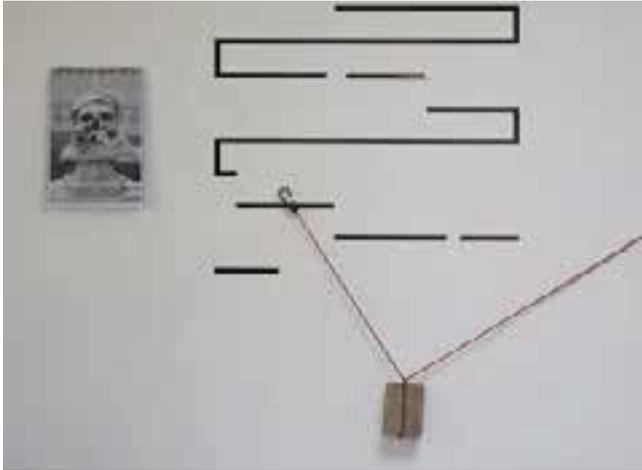
hovercraft is full of eels" is a way of asking for a box of matches. This is literally how codes and cyphers work, by agreed renegotiation of signification.



Francesco stresses that his translation of Sanguineti's poem is "unofficial". This underlines the doubt about what is being transmitted, and the possibility of transforming it into something else, perhaps not intended. He could be giving us an accurate translation or he could be giving us a hovercraft full of eels. He is certainly taking a line on the wall for a ride round the poem, so how do we trust language? If we turn the page, is there money, or nothing?

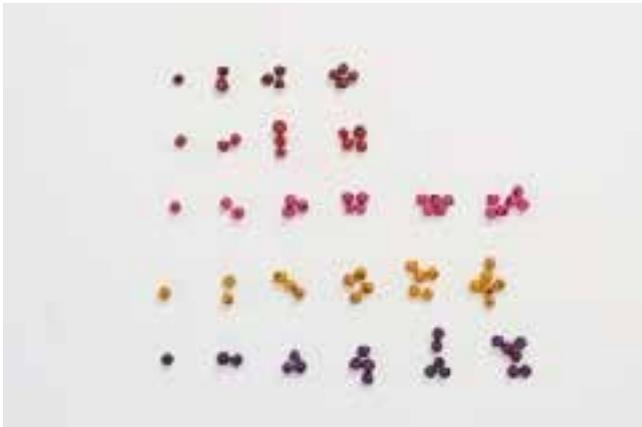
Adam naming things in the Garden of Eden, Francesco redefining the line, Patrick

beginning by asking if anyone can “do me a purple” was all part of a performative tapestry of re-appropriation and resignification too. It demonstrates the arbitrariness of signification. The magical realism of bringing objects into being by naming them, the imaginative act in which we are complicit every time we accept that the invisible surroundings portrayed by a mime, or the invisible interlocutor of a stand-up comedian up there on the stage.



Are they there or not there? In Week 18 we went into metaphor, the saying that *this* is *that* which occurs with the knowledge that *this* is not literally *that*, but our minds accept it for the purpose of comparison or instruction. The show is therefore all about the process of definition and signification, the hypnotic elixir of language that drugs us with its

heady excesses of meanings.



The week’s Sipsmith gin cocktail was called the LIQUID HYPNOTIC ELIXIR and it involved orange, sloe gin, and, crucially, acai. The acai is purple. The acaiphabet is a secret cypher invented by Patrick, which is unknown to anyone else and encoded by arrangements of acai berries. This private language is another example of

special verbalisation seemingly intended to manifest the non-verbal communications of plants that happens through their strange mating habits involving seeds and berries. Patrick admits good-humouredly that in curatorial terms this idea didn’t go much beyond apparently spelling out the artists’ names on the wall, but it fits into the themes of definition, communication and signification.



Patrick described the life cycle of the cicada, burrowing soon after birth into the earth and staying there, only emerging to mate and having mated dying. The funny little diacritical mark the cedilla, usually found under the c in words like Haçienda, can be found clinging limpet-like under the s in fig-2 curator Fatoş Üstek's

name. It is also found in the unfamiliar Açaí palm but not usually in the familiar Acai berry, the popular purple superfruit.

Having described the life cycle of the cicada, Patrick explained that, in contrast, cedillas live in the sky and burrow into clouds, emerging to mate; the winged cedillas attach to certain letters and once they deliver their seed they die a critic (diacritic). The young hatch and make their way through the artist guide, digging in with their strong legs to feed off “excess of egress”.



Excess of egress wasn't to be found in the beautiful part of the installation that was a video of some viscous purple “Lab goo” being poured into a purple cup. This weird substance has the consistency of the melty terminator in Terminator 2 and won't quite be poured into the cup but bounces back and forth

without quite being poured. This is a wonderful thing to behold and in the performance brought Patrick to lilt poetically “lapping the side, lapping the side! slapping the thigh! lapping the side! shimmering bright – slapping the side! touching the left, lapping the side, lapping the side” – I thought I misheard all of this as “lapping the side” which amused me all the more, assuming it was “slapping” but it was actually “lapping” after all. Part of the show's pleasure in wordplay delighted in such imaginative slippages as can take place between “the side” and “acai” and ICA.

The performance concluded with Patrick at the piano, and the song began with a reprise of “lapping the side” which you can listen to and enjoy via this here