

MARK AERIAL WALLER: THIS ISN'T NELSON'S TIME ITS 1956 AND ITS TIME TO GET OUT AND LEAVE THIS SHTICK!

Mark Aerial Waller interviewed by Joseph Murray
This Is Tomorrow
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Joseph Murray: *Hi Mark, during the installation I remember you described reconstructing the piece Midwatch after 10 years or so as being like trying to put a big puzzle back together. Could this idea of a puzzle also be applied to the relationships between the many referential elements within the show'*

Mark Aerial Waller: When producing a piece of work I don't see it as putting pieces of a puzzle together, it is more like overlapping different coloured pieces of glass, producing a third colour. It's more to do with being conscious, having memory whilst doing something, and anticipating the consequence of that happening after something else. For instance the video piece *Midwatch* came about after interviewing two veterans of the first British Nuclear tests for another film *Glow Boys*. The film is not an illustration of that interview, but a consequence of hearing their gallows humour, I was also reading *Moby Dick* at that time and thought about the crazy sea captain sailing his crew into certain death and how there seemed to be a relationship between him, the whale and the quest for nuclear power. I am not sure that there is a pre-determined way that something can fit next to or within something else in the work, it has more to do with the situation of reading whilst listening to music and watching the news whilst being bombarded with advertising and ideologies. The work also is the result of the struggle to materialise something of one's own within a world of dominant ideologies and orthodoxy. The pieces that emerge form other experience and don't discard the link to their origin, be it culture, experience or history. So can seem referential, but I think it is perhaps a mistake to see the work

as requiring to read certain books or watch certain films. There is hopefully a present tense to the work. I hope that the things brought forward from previous culture do not act as reference triggers, but are active operators, survivors of previous times and other places.

JM: *Midwatch bursting into the gallery space reminds me of when I was a child at Universal Studios in Florida and I was on the Jaws ride, Jaws kept smashing through different materials to try to eat me and the other people on the ride. I wondered if you could say a bit about its intrusion into the space and its relationship with the drawings.*

MAW: For those of you who have not seen the show, *Midwatch* is a video work housed in a black oblong box, big enough for 5 people to sit in together and watch the screen. It is positioned in an oblique angle to the wall, jutting into the room, like an uninvited guest in the show. I like to think about the gallery space as a site for a fiction to occur, or have occurred, where the objects may become exhibits of a crime scene or archaeological site. The video itself is set in an inconsistent time, one character thinks that it is 1956, the other thinks that it is 'Nelson's Time'. It is shot in black and white on a very low-end miniature camera, which shares an aesthetic with the Sony Portapack; the camera of choice for the 1960's/70's video art pioneers. So the implicit temporality is 70's/50's/1790's, but quite clearly none of these at all. There is no attempt to make a period drama here. The fiction is in honesty, roughly fabricated. Now, ten years on from first showing the piece, I wanted to make clear the temporal inconsistency. In 2001, just after completing the installation for the first time, the piece seemed too new to be able to properly invade across time. Now that it has aged in the store it seems more capable of operating as a remainder from the 'old days', uncomfortably finding itself in the present. The drawings are both completely separate and consistent with *Midwatch*. These are graphite representations of a tombstone with offerings placed on top. Coins, earrings and a variety of unlikely small objects have been left there, posted in hope and faith to go across to death, and perhaps back, recharged, from some alternate space where the dead painter 'lying nearby' resides. So *Midwatch* entering the scene could be seen as a response to the coin offerings, like a returned call. The box itself is constructed from shuttering ply, the type of wood used for covering broken shop windows, or for sealing vacant property, and this has been scorched black, except for an area in the shape of a battleships silhouette. During the research about nuclear warfare and power I read about the silhouettes of bodies burnt into the granite in Nagasaki from the US nuclear assault. The method of the box finish is a reminder of that.

JM: *Thanks Mark. The show looks great!*

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