

John Russell
Ocean Pose

Matt's Gallery

18.4-3.6.2007

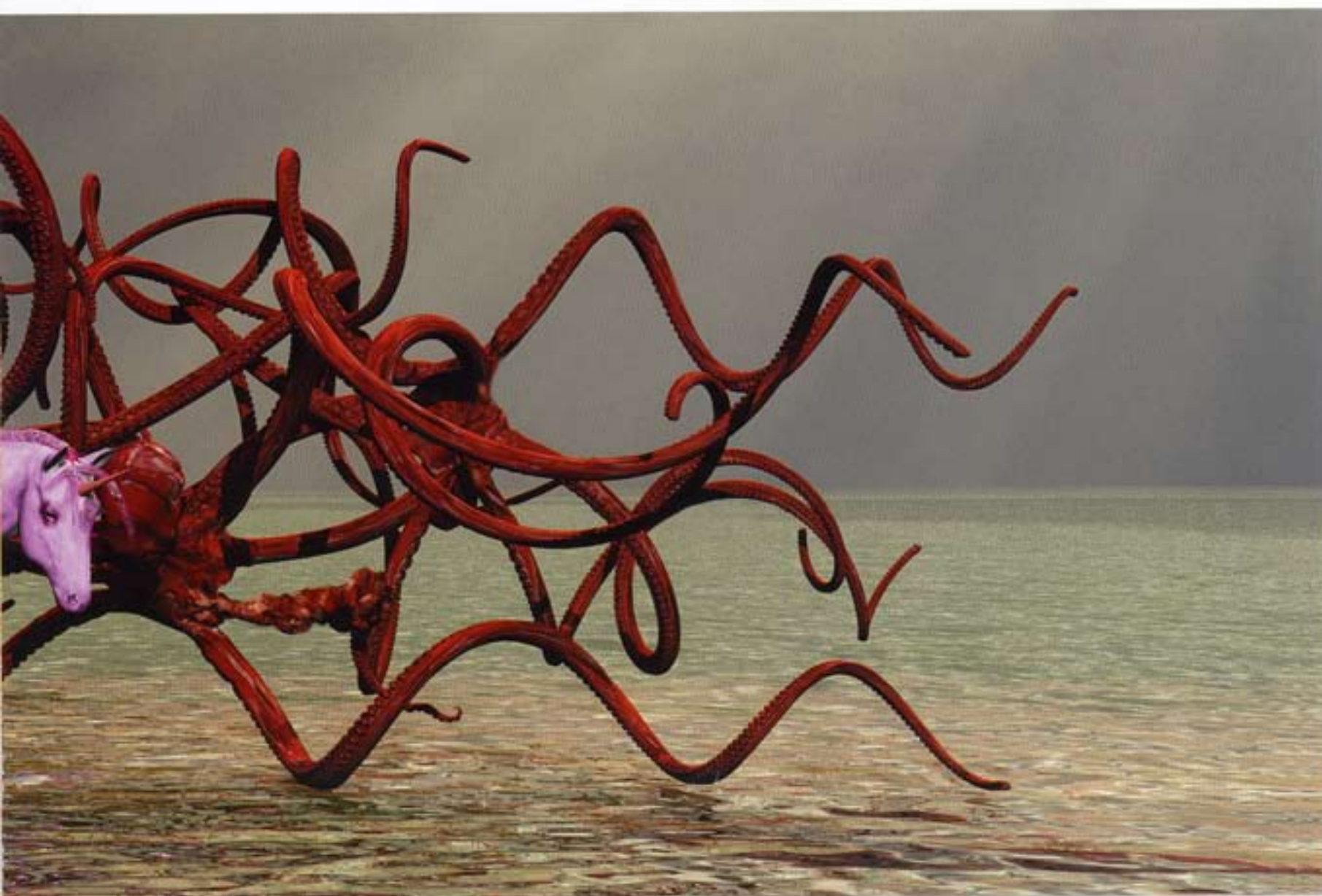
Free with exhibition



O c e a n p o s e.
ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose.
ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose.
ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose ...
starting in the south ... starting as a whisper ... a rumour ... a name uttered softly ... whispered on street corners ... growing as it travels, expanding, developing, growing ... growing ... growing ... ocean pose ... ocean pose ... OCEAN POSE ... OCEAN POSE. For Ocean Pose, John Russell's first exhibition at Matt's Gallery – and also first solo show in London – the artist presents the spectacle of four ten by thirty-five feet back-lit tableaux, printed digitally on vinyl, depicting scenes of people standing in a seductive and infinite ocean IN THE THROES OF ECSTASY. These are people saying 'YES' to life – caught in the thrall of the event AND SPREADING THEIR DESIRE THROUGHOUT THE WORLD

LIKE A CONTAGION. It may be unclear whether these poses are the result of 'free-will' or whether they are fixed as narrative or compositional elements within a wider *philosophical context*, but anyway these questions are subsidiary to the performative or ILLOCUTIONARY FORCE of the works as the staging of a staging, or PRESENTATION OF A PRESENTATION. A self-articulation of the fiction of an artwork-as-event-as-prophecy and/or-curse of the unleashing of THE POWER OF THE FALSE. In this respect the shimmering sun-soaked plane of the ocean is equivalent to the illuminated surface of the picture/object plane, both pitched superficially at the surface of things as an absolute (abstract/virtual) flatness – an incorporeal realm where the forms, passions, shapes and rhythms of this flatness might slip and explode as ideas, states of affairs,

shapes, bodies and forces in the real world – a world from which THEY ARE ANYWAY NOT SEPARATED. Ocean pose exists in a variety of actualisations – the exhibition at Matt's Gallery, a website and publication/artwork, the 13th in the second series of Matt's Gallery booklets available free of charge at the exhibition. ... Marcella Johnson was twenty-nine years old. She had shoulder length copper hair, gold flecked, widely spaced, brown eyes, a full, luscious mouth and a strong, square jaw which saved her from being merely beautiful and made her face challenging and alert. She was nine feet seven inches tall, 190 pounds. Apart from being kind-hearted and a good friend, when the need arose she had an acerbic wit and wild sense of humour ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose.



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ocean pose. ocean pose. emerging from
the multitude of phenomena, which might
or might not have happened – the various
life forms, which may or may not have
come into existence, ocean pose exists as
a SINGULARITY – an entity, perhaps
tied contingently to its [cultural] ‘loca-
tion’ as an ART EVENT – which
MIGHT ALWAYS HAVE BEEN
OTHERWISE. ocean pose. ocean pose.
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ocean pose. o what are the voices saying?
... what are the voices saying. THERE
WAS A TRAGIC SADNESS ENER-
VATING HER BEING: THE EC-
STATIC SORROW [of her negativity]
WAS LIKE AN ELECTRIC FORCE
IN HER BODY. The plane of the
OCEAN is set at a tangent to the plane of
the image. ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean
pose. ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose.
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ocean pose. He was in trouble. The
woman shouted at him and pointed and
turned and shouted to other people. It
wasn't the best place to be recognised as
a paedophile – in the shallow end at a mun-
icipal swimming pool. He had been
named and shamed in a newspaper that

week. And there had been a series of posters put up locally but the photo was out of date and he hadn't thought he would be recognised. And he'd grown a beard. His denials were not working. He was in trouble. The families circled around him. He tried to explain that the therapy... but they weren't interested.

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ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose.
ocean pose. ocean pose. ocean pose. Marlon Devonish was one helluva guy. Imagine arranging your own marriage ceremony so it self consciously pointed to its own



performativity. The whole service was ironic, including quotes from Austin and Butler, and kind of commenting on the performative nature of the act while doing it 'I do. I do. I do'. Ha ha ha ha. this distinction between located-ness and un-located-ness is already internal to Kant's conception of the aesthetic which, in his *Critique of Judgement* develops, in part, as a response to the philosophical problem as to how to mediate between the gen-

eralities of reason and the particularities of sense (roughly the distinction between rationalism and empiricism). In this configuration the 'particularities of sense' could be seen to be located (or contingent) and the 'generalities of reason' un-located (or abstract). As such the aesthetic is staged as a vital bridging component within his wider philosophical system, whereby a proper understanding of the faculty of judgement provides a connec-

tion between the 'immeasurable gulf' that lies between the sensible realm of the concept of nature and the supersensible realm of the concept of freedom. Unfortunately, post-Kantian aesthetics can be seen to be staged theoretically and ideologically in relation to Kant's philosophical structuring of the aesthetic as an autonomous domain, coordinate with man's cognitive and moral faculties. In this configuration apprehension of the sensuous content of



the artwork stands in for 'the loss of reciprocity between humans and the world,' and by imputing to art 'the metaphoric power to reconcile sensuous experience and conceptual reason, art promises the restoration of the antinomies of consciousness of nature, subject, object'. ... is concerned with the reduction of painting to the 'ineluctable flatness of the canvas,' in a process of purification, and in an attempt to avoid associations with false, illusionistic, three-dimensional

space. ... art is staged as an idealist construct that must explore its formal potential within the prescribed limits of the disciplines of painting or ... Greenberg's proposed move to pure two-dimensionality is impossible (as a space of 'a purely optical experience' that we can 'travel through only with the eye') considering two dimensional space is an abstraction. A physical object cannot be flat, as Greenberg himself admits 'the first mark made on a surface destroys its virtual flat-

ness'. Flatness [and/or opticality] in this sense is a conceptual category. 'To render substance entirely optical, and form, whether pictorial, sculptural, or architectural, as an integral part of ambient space – this brings anti-illusionism full circle. Instead of the illusion of things, we are now offered the illusion of modalities: namely, that matter is incorporeal, weightless, and exists only optically like a mirage.' We are literalists most of our lives. Presentness is grace. ... involv-



ing the 'adequately sensitive, adequately informed, spectator' that the artwork is dependent upon, and created by, the structures and languages of the institution which stage the artwork as art. conception of 'art' in its modern European sense as sensuous particularity or aesthetic [...] aesthetic drop-outs, as mind-trippers on heady structural linguistics, in effect gave the finger to the traditionally minded Formalists ... fulfilling all the requirements

for a Modernist painting in such a way as to negate everything that is potentially aesthetically significant about them. This is achieved by fixing the composition and mechanising the procedure of production. Art is the safety valve of our repressive system. As long as it exists, and better, yet, the more prevalent it becomes, art will be the system's distracting mask. And a system has nothing to fear as long as its reality is masked, as long as its contradictions

are hidden. In this configuration, art is inevitably allied to power. And so the artist 'if he wants to work for another society, must begin by fundamentally contesting art and assuming his total rupture with it. IF NOT, THE NEXT REVOLUTION WILL TAKE OVER HIS RESPONSIBILITY.' – a mutual sense of psychologically indifferent decoration. comes at the end of, summarises, and radically generalises a movement which starting in the

1950s experiments with different ways of expanding the art object. It could be argued that the point at which the art object has become conceptual is the point at which it has become INFINITELY SPATIALLY EXPANDED. This isn't to say it has become freed from any material determination but that it has become freed from every particular material determination. the site of the work of art can be seen to be the totality of cultural sites within which it is mediated

and consumed. suggests the possibility that the artwork is either staged finitely (located) – for instance staged strategically and/or politically, in relation to institutional definitions or critical limits; or staged infinitely (un-located) as transcendent of the structures which create it as art. Or staged as art/non-art in relation to the expanded and dynamic conceptions of the institution suggested by Graham & Wall. This dialectic of limits is therefore staged between ideas of lo-

cation and unlocation, or site and non-site or between the finitude of the institution and the infinity of the universe. This also points to another possibility of staging, as an alternative to stagings of location and/or unlocation, that is the possibility of the SPECULATIVELY STAGED and the terror of indeterminacy. It should however be here re-emphasized gradually, that the theoretical and ideological structures which inform and demarcate these stagings of art, are also themselves staged. it, can never reach its





conclusion – and in fact this is its purpose or its institutional remit. The conversation must continue to allow for the continued existence of the space in which the conversation is staged. And in relation to the insight that the support languages of the artworld (criticism etc.) constitute and validate art as art. It was for instance seen that it was the critical discourse which surrounded Minimalist art which allowed Minimalist art objects to be viewed as art. As Art & Language write: 'Artworks are (at least in part) created by the

support languages acting as explicative and elucidatory tools to the central creative core. The initial language has been what is called "visual," the support languages have taken on what shall be called here "conventional" written sign language form.' The Good Conversation flows seamlessly (like the flow of capital) and the continuation of the Good Conversation suits the administrators of it. it merges into the wall, and then, gradually into the general text. With respect to the background, which the general text is, it

merges into the work which stands out against the general background.' Nietzsche describes ascetic ideals as 'the priests ideals.' This involves a criticism of Kant's configuration of the aesthetic as dispassionate and impersonal. As he describes it: 'in the physiologically injured and atrophied (the majority of mortals) an attempt to see themselves "too good" for this world, a saintly form of debauch [...] In Saints, finally, a pretext for hibernation, their newest lust for glory, their repose in nothingness



("God") their form of insanity' flourishing 'on the corpse of [art's] social relevance,' existing as a 'critique of alienation, as an exemplary realization of creative powers, as the reconciliation of subject and object, universal and particular, freedom and necessity, theory and practice, individual and society, of incorporeal sense as frolicking on the surface of bodies, actions and forces. That is, the sense existing or inhering between the whole series of interacting micro-events, occurring on a series of registers – explosions,

flesh, the movement of bodies, the different responses of the different performers, noise, sweat dripping down skin, light shining on chrome, noise, the vibration of tympanic membranes, absence or otherwise of jewellery. According to Owens one of the effects of Greenbergian 'purity' was the repression of language and linguistic structures within the visual field. For Owens it was not only words but more specifically allegory, which he associated with the temporal dimension of language as it unfolds in

time that was repressed from the visual arts. In this respect Deleuze and Guattari argue that beyond the homogenising habit-formed effect of representation is a **DYNAMIC UNIVERSE OF MULTIPLICITY** and becoming. In this sense it is art's function to 'switch our intensive register,' by destabilising our thinking, disrupting our faculties and freeing our senses from established tendencies, to open us up 'to a non-human universe that we are part of but typically estranged from.' Thus Deleuze proposes the



new as 'our world experienced differently, a world of impermanence and interpenetration, a molecular world of becoming.' According to Deleuze, this distinction refers to two planes of being, one of which concerns the tensions, physical qualities, actions and passions of bodies; and the other of which concerns 'incorporeal' entities or events that do not exist but rather 'subsist or inhere' in states of affairs. Incorporeal entities can never be actually present. 'The sun is shining'

expresses a sense that 'inheres' in the proposition, but is never reducible to the state of affairs of either one specific or even an endless series of specific instances of a shining sun. While states of affairs have the temporality of the living present, the incorporeal events of sense are infinitives (to shine etc) that constitute pure becomings with a temporality of their own – a form of time independent of matter that always eludes the present. Thus, no matter how many times the state

of affairs of a shining sun is actualised, the sense of 'the sun is shining' is not exhausted. It is this 'frontier of sense' between what words express and the attributes of bodies that allows language to be distinguished from physical bodies. If the actions and passions of bodies make sense, it is because that sense is not itself either an action or a passion, but is rather an incorporeal effect of a state of affairs that enters into relations of quasi-causality with other incorporeal events of sense.



The virtual relations of the events of sense constitute the condition of any given speech act. What transforms the accused into the convict is the incorporeal attribute that is the expressed in or of the judge's sentence; again, the Individual speech is only the effect of a more primary repetition at the level of statements and performatives that define (and are defined by) a given social field. Language is therefore social and collective, rather than individual and is ontologically prior to the notion of the isolated human subject. territorialisation and deterritorialisation is the assertion that the order-word functions through redundancy: that language refers not to an extra-linguistic world, but rather back to what has been said before: 'language does not operate between something seen (or felt) and something

said, but always goes from saying to saying.' One does not speak as much as one repeats 'simulacra do not refer to anything behind or beyond the world but in fact they MAKE UP THE WORLD. In this conception simulation is a force or power in itself able to do things and not merely represent. POWER OF FALSE 'What something is (actually) is also its power to become (virtually).' Counter to ... idea that there is a real world which precedes simulation) there is only, and ever was, an original process of simulation. There is not an original life that is then varied or copied in different versions. fiction expresses the FORCE OF LANGUAGE. gives us other worlds and other becomings but that it does so, not by being a simple copy of the actual world, but by extending the virtual tendencies of the given

world. 'political constitutions have a discursive regime identical to that of the constitution of literary structures.' In this sense, the promise of the political manifesto is not only to declare a series of intentions in the abstract but also to bring about the conditions to which it refers ... possibility exists for fiction to function in truth, for a fictional discourse to induce effects of truth, and for bringing it about that a true discourse engenders or manufactures something that does not as yet exist, that is, "fictions" it. stages itself as illocutional force – a force which may do or mean or fix or perform etc.'



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Published by Matt's Gallery
42-44 Copperfield Road
London E3 4RR

T 020 8983 1771

F 020 8983 1435

E info@mattsgallery.org

www.mattsgallery.org

Director: Robin Klassnik

Gallery Manager (Exhibitions):

Joyce Cronin

Gallery Manager (Projects):

Clare Fitzpatrick

Interns and invigilators: Rachel Butcher,

Rosemary Cronin, Larissa Hadjio, Mary

Hurrell, Sarah Purchase

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