



RHYS COREN

## R H Y S C O R E N

Born 1983, Plymouth, United Kingdom  
Lives and works in London

### Education

- 2016 Post Graduate Diploma, Royal Academy Schools, London
- 2006 BA, UWE, Bristol, United Kingdom
- 2002 Foundation Diploma, Plymouth College of Art, United Kingdom

### Solo and Two-Person Exhibitions

- 2019 *Shape of Story*, Seventeen, London
- 2018 *Rock-hard Aura and the Lost Explorer*, Grimm Gallery, New York  
*Main Street Video*, Aldrich Museum of Contemporary Art, Ridgefield, Connecticut  
*Love Motion*, Royal Academy of Arts Courtyard / Lumiere Festival, London
- 2017 *Whistle Bump Super Strut*, Seventeen, London
- 2016 *click, click, click-clap-click*, galeriepcp, Paris
- 2014 *If We Can Dance Together*, Jerwood Project Space, London  
*Four to the Floor*, Horatio Jr., London
- 2013 *Beat the Box*, Corfu, London  
*Apparel & Ornament*, SPACE, London
- 2012 *The Man Who Knew Too Little*, Seventeen, London

### Group Exhibitions

- 2020 *Triple Play*, Steve Turner, Los Angeles  
*Summer Exhibition*, Cristea Roberts Gallery, London
- 2019 *FUTBOLKA*, Tÿ Pawb, Wrexham, United Kingdom  
Drawing Biennial 2019, Drawing Room, London  
*Colour Snap*, University of Hertfordshire, Hatfield, United Kingdom  
*Football is Art*, The National Football Museum, Manchester, United Kingdom
- 2018 *Rhythm, Stress & Pausing*, Super Dutchess, New York  
*Doors of Paradise*, Union Pacific, London  
*New Editions*, Cristea Roberts Gallery, London  
*EDDYSROOM@GALLERITHOMASSEN*, Galleri Thomassen, Gothenburg, Sweden  
*Cerrajería*, Lock Up International, Mexico City  
*Any body suspended in space will remain in space until made aware of its situation*, Temnikova & Kasela, Tallinn, Estonia
- 2017 *Dead Heat*, Kunstraum Ortloff, Leipzig, Germany  
*Fickle Food Upon A Shifting Plate*, Studio Leigh, London  
*Animate!*, Screen City Biennial, MS Sandnes Boat, Stavanger, Norway  
*You see me like a UFO*, Marcelle Joseph Projects, Ascott, United Kingdom  
*Look Me In The Eye Sister*, Galeria Layendecker, Tenerife, Spain  
*Abacus, Bluecoat*, Liverpool, United Kingdom  
*Form and Volume*, CFHILL, Stockholm, Sweden  
*Art Video for Kids*, Kunstall Stavanger, Norway  
Drawing Biennial 2017, Drawing Room, London  
*Does Your Chewing Gum Lose Its Flavour (On The Bedpost Overnight)*, J Hammond Projects, London  
*Walled Gardens in an Insane Eden*, Marcelle Joseph @ Sara Zanin, Rome
- 2016 *Beyond the Cartoon*, Cassina Projects w/Artuner, New York  
*Cuts, Shapes, Breaks and Scrapes*, Seventeen, London  
*Royal Academy Schools Degree Show*, Royal Academy, London
- 2015 Studio Leigh, London  
*VIDEO VIDEO*, CHART Art Fair, Copenhagen  
Drawing Biennial 2015, Drawing Room, London

- Dearth*, Boiler Room, London  
*From Centre*, Slate Projects, London  
*Premiums Interim Projects*, Royal Academy of Arts, London
- 2014 *A Union of Voices*, Horatio Jr., London  
*E-Vapor-8*, Site Gallery, Sheffield, United Kingdom  
*Symbolic Logic*, Identity Gallery, Hong Kong  
*Welcome to Corfu*, The Depot, London
- 2013 *Action! Moving Image Abstraction*, Soho House, Miami  
*Stop / Action*, Test Space, Spike Island, Bristol, United Kingdom  
*A Show in an Apartment*, Apartment 4, Clermont-Ferrand, France  
*Vestige*, Design Museum, London  
*Young London*, V22, London  
*Magic 8 Ball*, FOLD, London  
*Leeds! Leeds! Leeds!*, blip blip blip, Leeds, United Kingdom  
*Lot N°*, Lionel Dobie / Capes Dunn Auction House, Manchester, United Kingdom  
*SUCCESONE*, CREATE London website take-over  
*Like A Monkey With A Miniature Symbol*, Aid & Abet, Cambridge, United Kingdom  
*BYOB*, Boiler Room, London  
*A3 Works*, A3 Project Space, Birmingham, United Kingdom  
*A Guide To The Galaxy*, Gloria Maria Gallery, Milan  
*The Shortest Video Art Ever Sold*, Moving Image Art Fair, New York  
*Decenter*, decenterarmory.com / Abrons Arts Center, New York
- 2012 *ZOMBIE MODERNISM*, Malgras|Naudet, Manchester, United Kingdom  
*Hashfail* as part of Open File III, Grand Union, Birmingham, United Kingdom  
*Zerrissenheit*, RISE, Berlin  
*Stelle Negli Occhi*, Art Licks website take-over  
*Happy Accident*, Wandering Around Wandering, New York  
*The Response*, The Sunday Painter, London  
*Accidental Purpose*, accidentalpurpose.net  
*E-Vapor-8*, 319 Scholes, New York  
*Energia Della Danza*, Trade Gallery website take-over  
*Big Love*, Catch, London
- 2011 *One Night Stand*, Peckham Hotel, London  
*Anti-Library*, SPACE, London  
*Space Exchange*, Aid & Abet, Cambridge, United Kingdom  
*ICML PRSNT... No Woman No Cry*, The Royal Standard, Liverpool, United Kingdom  
*# 4*, Fort, London  
*Animate Everything*, Hewitt Street, London  
*Friendship of the Peoples*, Simon Oldfield Gallery, London  
*my friend speak HTML*, NRMAL FESTIVAL, Monterrey, Mexico  
*ICML PRSNT... Duck Hunt*, Rhubaba, Edinburgh, Scotland
- 2010 *Something is Coming*, Godspreeeed Gallery, Richmond, Virginia  
*Techno-Thriller*, The Newbridge Project, Newcastle, United Kingdom  
*VIDEO PROGETTO*, Grand Union, Birmingham UK and 26CC, Rome  
*Paintings From England & America*, CRISP, London
- 2009 *ICML PRSNT... Black Rainbow*, Motorcade / FlashParade, Bristol, United Kingdom  
*Building Up Not Tearing Down*, tactileBOSCHE, Cardiff, Wales  
*NEVERandagain*, ISCP, New York  
*I haven't seen the place I've looked at*, Syndicat Potentiel, Strasbourg, France  
*Picture Parlour: Pecha Kucha Freestyle*, ISCP, New York  
*Climate For Change*, FACT, Liverpool, United Kingdom  
*SALE*, The Royal Standard, Liverpool, United Kingdom
- 2008 *chincio minutes depois/5 minutes later*, A Certain Lack of Coherence, Porto, Portugal  
*Consequence Aside*, Control, Newcastle, United Kingdom

O P E N E N D E D, Rogue, Manchester, United Kingdom  
*meet me round the corner (in five minutes)*, Spike Island, Bristol, United Kingdom  
2007 *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, Cornerhouse, Manchester, United Kingdom, Club Rowe, London;  
New Art Gallery, Walsall, United Kingdom

### **Residencies and Awards**

2011 Project Space 11 Artist Residency, Plymouth, United Kingdom  
2010 TactileBOSCHE Artist Residency, Cardiff, Wales  
2009 International Studio Curatorial Program Residency, New York  
Room13 Residency - Harclive Primary School, Bristol, United Kingdom  
Venice Agendas, Italy

### **Bibliography**

2019 Frankel, Eddy. "Rhys Coren: Shape of Story review," *Time Out*  
"Putting The "You" in Color: Rhys Coren's Fuzy Familiarity," *Juxtapoz*, February 21  
2017 Treagus, Phil. "Rhys Coren: Think About It Later," *The Reading Lists*  
Joseph, Marcelle. "Marcelle Joseph Interviews Artist Rhys Coren," *FAD Magazine*, March 23  
Stone, Bryony. "'Music almost always fuels the work': multidisciplinary artist Rhys Coren on his latest show," *It's Nice That*, March 14  
Douglas, Caroline. "Rhys Coren: Whistle Bump Super Strut at Seventeen Gallery, London," *Contemporary Art Society*, March 10

# SELECTED EXHIBITIONS



*Triple Play*. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



*Triple Play*. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



*Triple Play*. Installation view, Steve Turner, 2020



*Summer Exhibition. Installation view, Cristea Roberts Gallery, London, 2020*



*Shape of Story*. Installation view, Seventeen, London, 2019



*Shape of Story*. Installation view, Seventeen, London, 2019



*Shape of Story*. Installation view, Seventeen, London, 2019



*Doors of Paradise*. Installation view, Union Pacific, London, 2018



*Rock-hard Aura and the Lost Explorer*. Installation view, Grimm Gallery, New York, 2018



*Rock-hard Aura and the Lost Explorer*. Installation view, Grimm Gallery, New York, 2018



*Rock-hard Aura and the Lost Explorer*. Installation view, Grimm Gallery, New York, 2018



*Fickle Food Upon A Shifting Plate*. Installation view, Studio Leigh, London



*Rock-hard Aura and the Lost Explorer*. Installation view, Grimm Gallery, New York, 2018



*Abacus*. Installation view, Bluecoat, Liverpool, United Kingdom, 2017



*Whistle Bump Super Strut*. Installation view, Seventeen, London, 2017



*Whistle Bump Super Strut*. Installation view, Seventeen, London, 2017



*Whistle Bump Super Strut*. Installation view, Seventeen, London, 2017



*Whistle Bump Super Strut*. Installation view, Seventeen, London, 2017



*Walled Gardens in an Insane Eden*. Installation view, Marcelle Joseph @ Sara Zanin, Rome, 2017



*click, click, click-clap-click*. Installation view, galeriepcp, Paris, 2016



*click, click, click-clap-click*. Installation view, galeriepcp, Paris, 2016



*From Centre*. Installation view, Slate Projects, London, 2015

# SELECTED WORKS



*Forty-five Played at Thirty-three I*, 2020  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
24 x 24 inches (61 x 61 cm)



*Forty-five Played at Thirty-three II, 2020*  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
24 x 24 inches (61 x 61 cm)



Rhys Coren

*I Turned Around When I Heard The Sound I*, 2020

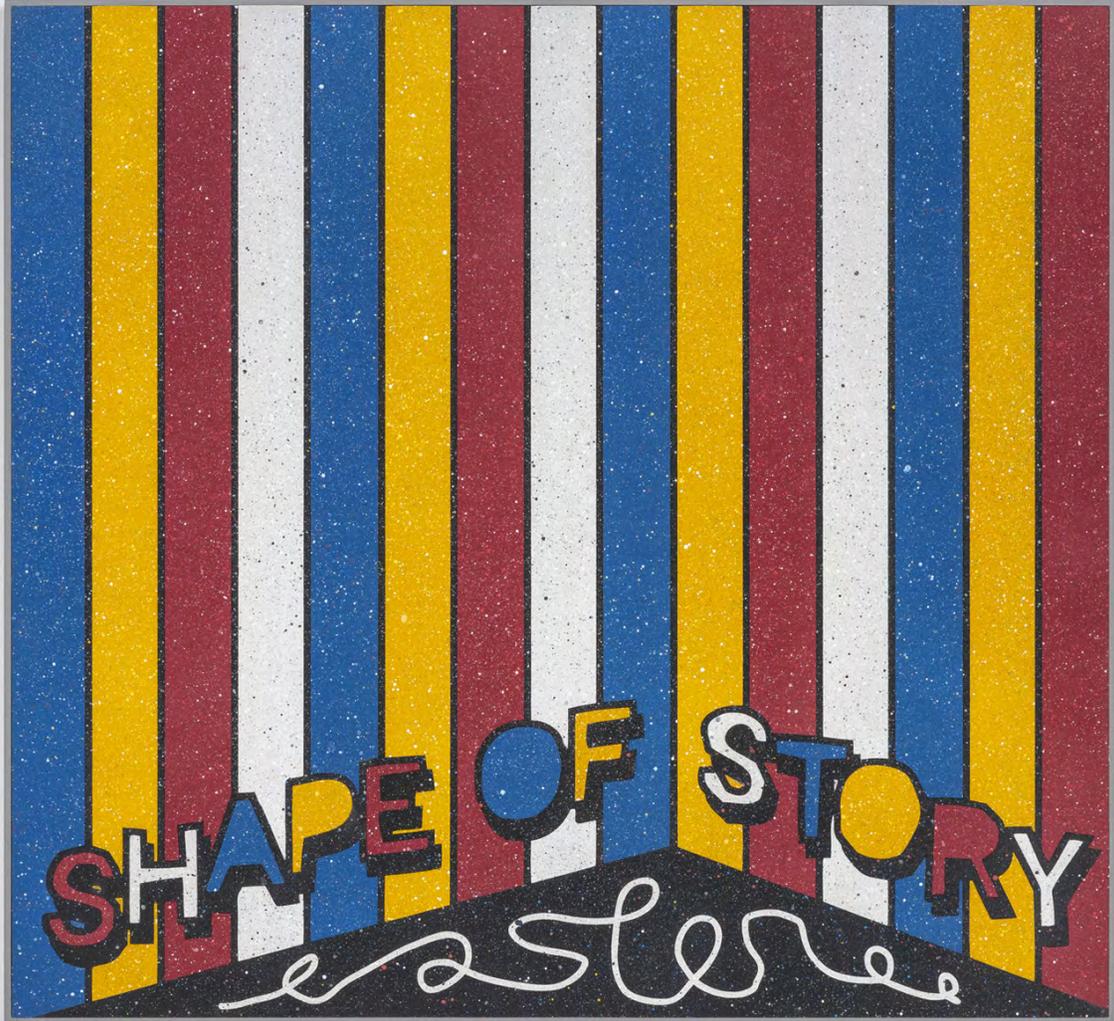
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board

20 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 16 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches (51 x 41 cm)

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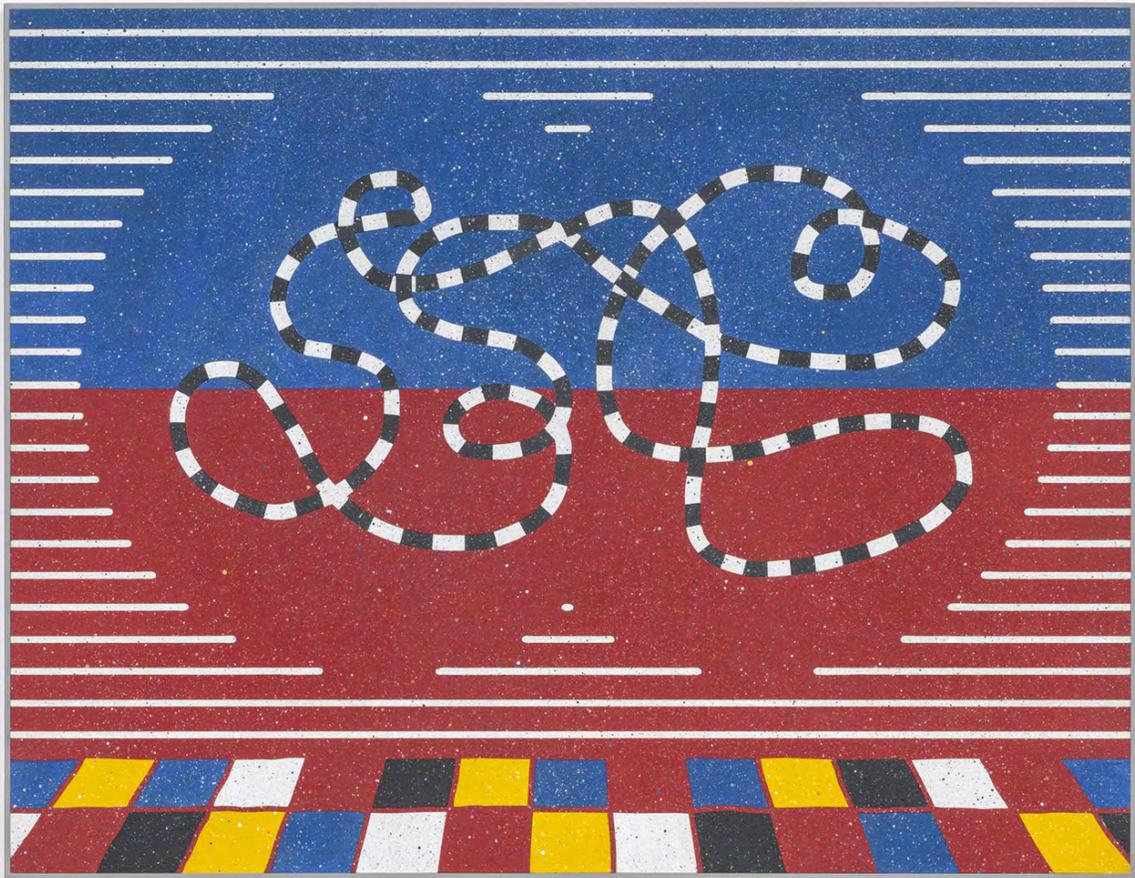
*I Turned Around When I Heard The Sound II*, 2020  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
20 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> x 16 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>8</sub> inches (51 x 41 cm)



*day-noo-MON*, 2019  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
23 5/8 x 25 5/8 inches (60 x 65 cm)



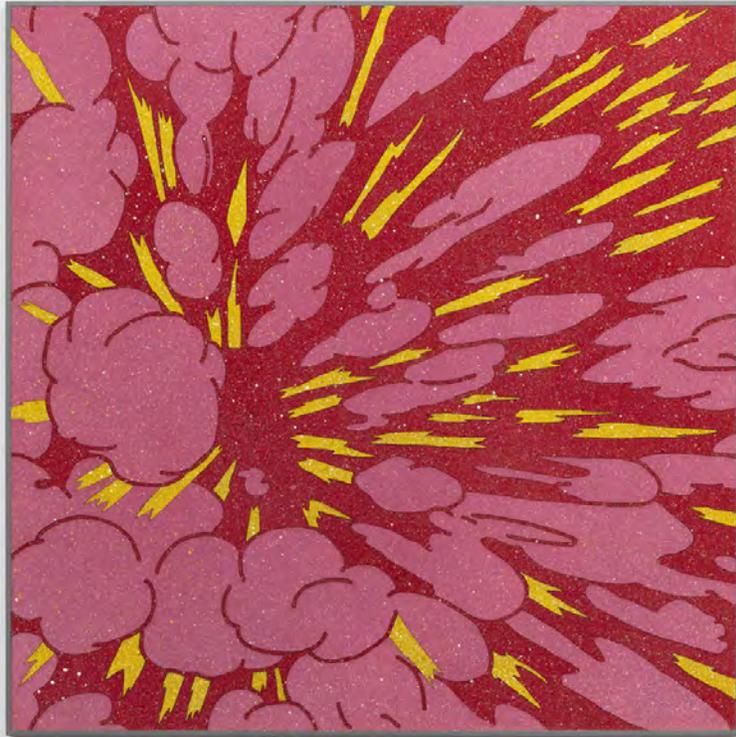
*E&C (In Full Swing)*, 2019  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
27 1/2 x 27 1/2 inches (70 x 70 cm)



*Mood*, 2019  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
22 7/8 x 29 1/2 inches (58 x 75 cm)



*Pfffff*, 2019  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
21 5/8 x 17 3/4 inches (55 x 45 cm)



*As I walk, walk, walk (and you run)*, 2018  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
22 x 22 inches (56 x 56 cm)



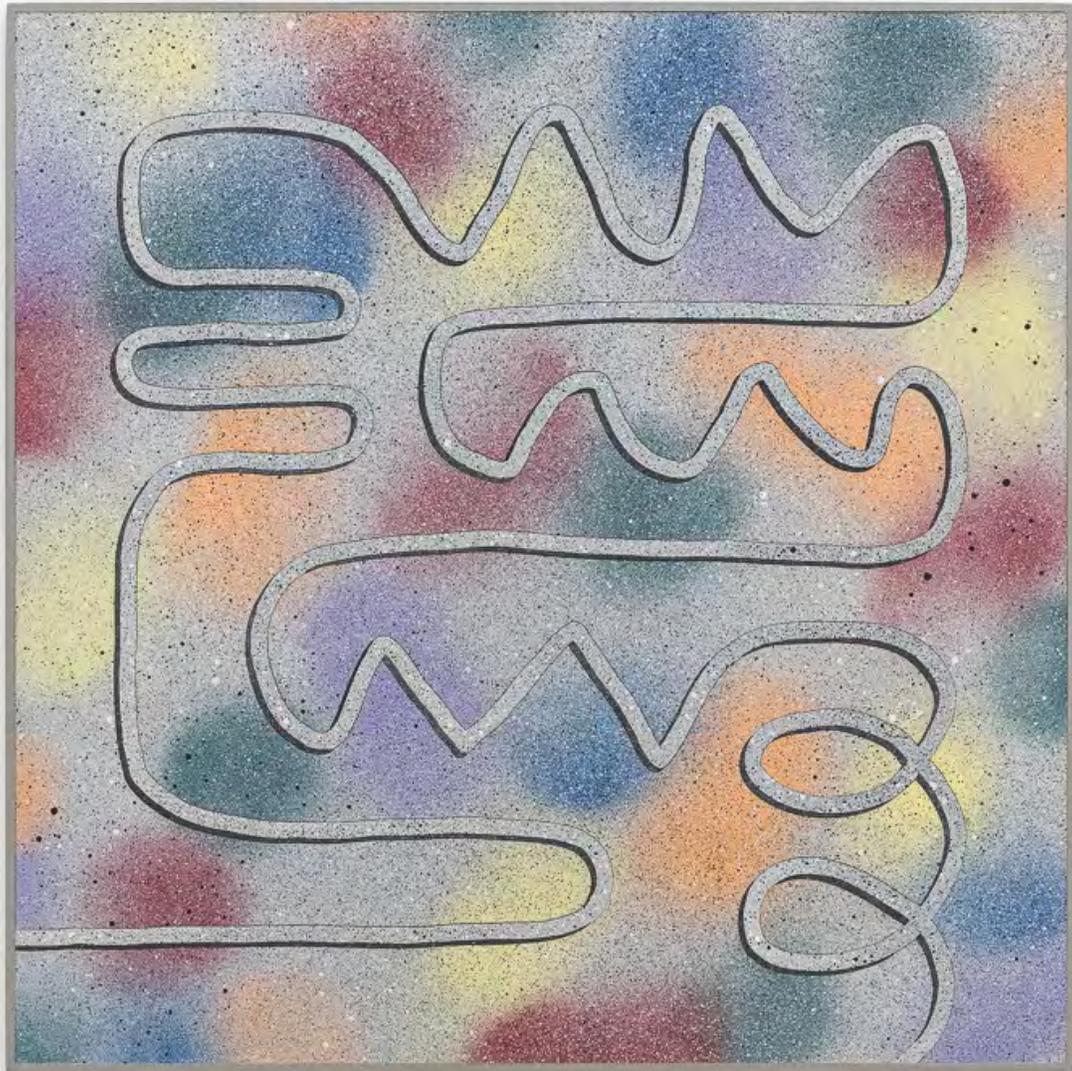
*Eanie Meanie M'Boom Maybe*, 2018  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
23 5/8 x 23 5/8 inches (60 x 60 cm)



*Pointy-headed Peers*, 2018  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
21 1/4 x 24 3/8 inches (54 x 62 cm)



*Upsidaisium*, 2018  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
31 1/2 x 31 1/2 inches (80 x 80 cm)



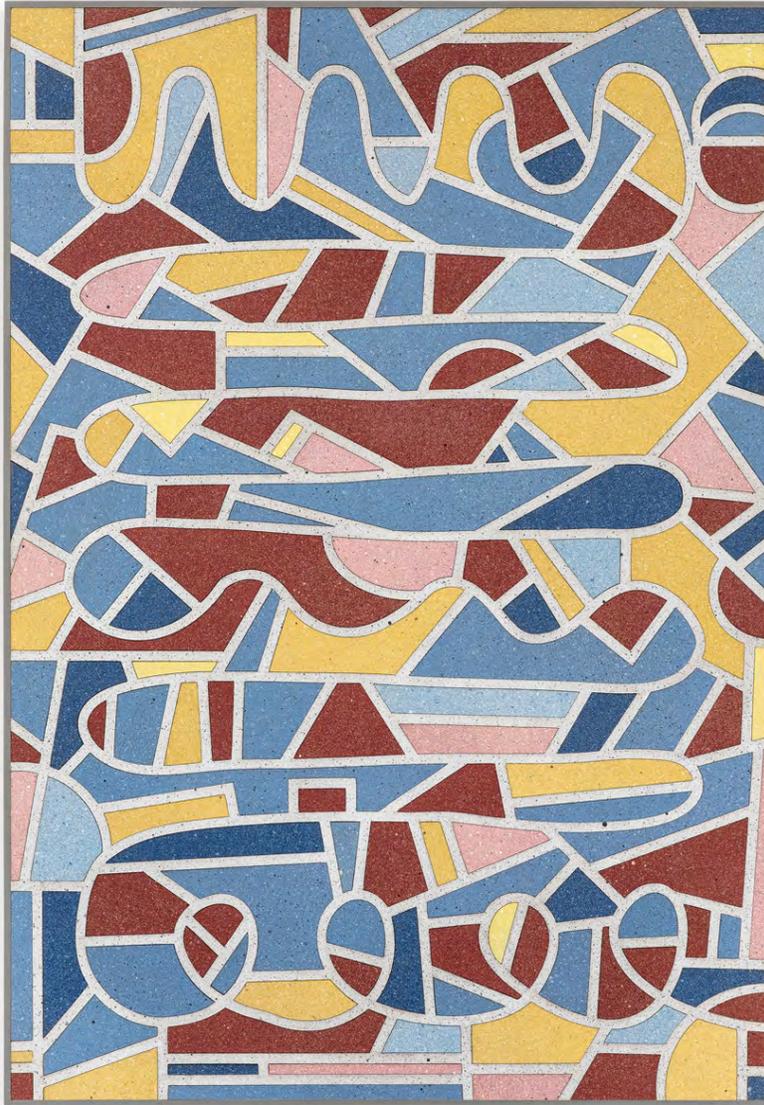
*All I Want is All I know*, 2017  
Spray paint and acrylic on board  
17 3/4 x 17 3/4 inches (45 x 45 cm)



*S.M.I.L.E.*, 2017  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
37 3/8 x 102 3/8 inches (95 x 260 cm)



*The Perennial Pandangle*, 2017  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
23 5/8 x 23 5/8 inches (60 x 60 cm)



*Your Drip Dry Eyes*, 2017  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
25 5/8 x 17 3/4 inches (65 x 45 cm)



*Always Have Somebody Chasing Somebody Else*, 2016  
Enamel spray paint and acrylic on board  
42 1/8 x 24 3/8 inches (107 x 62 cm)

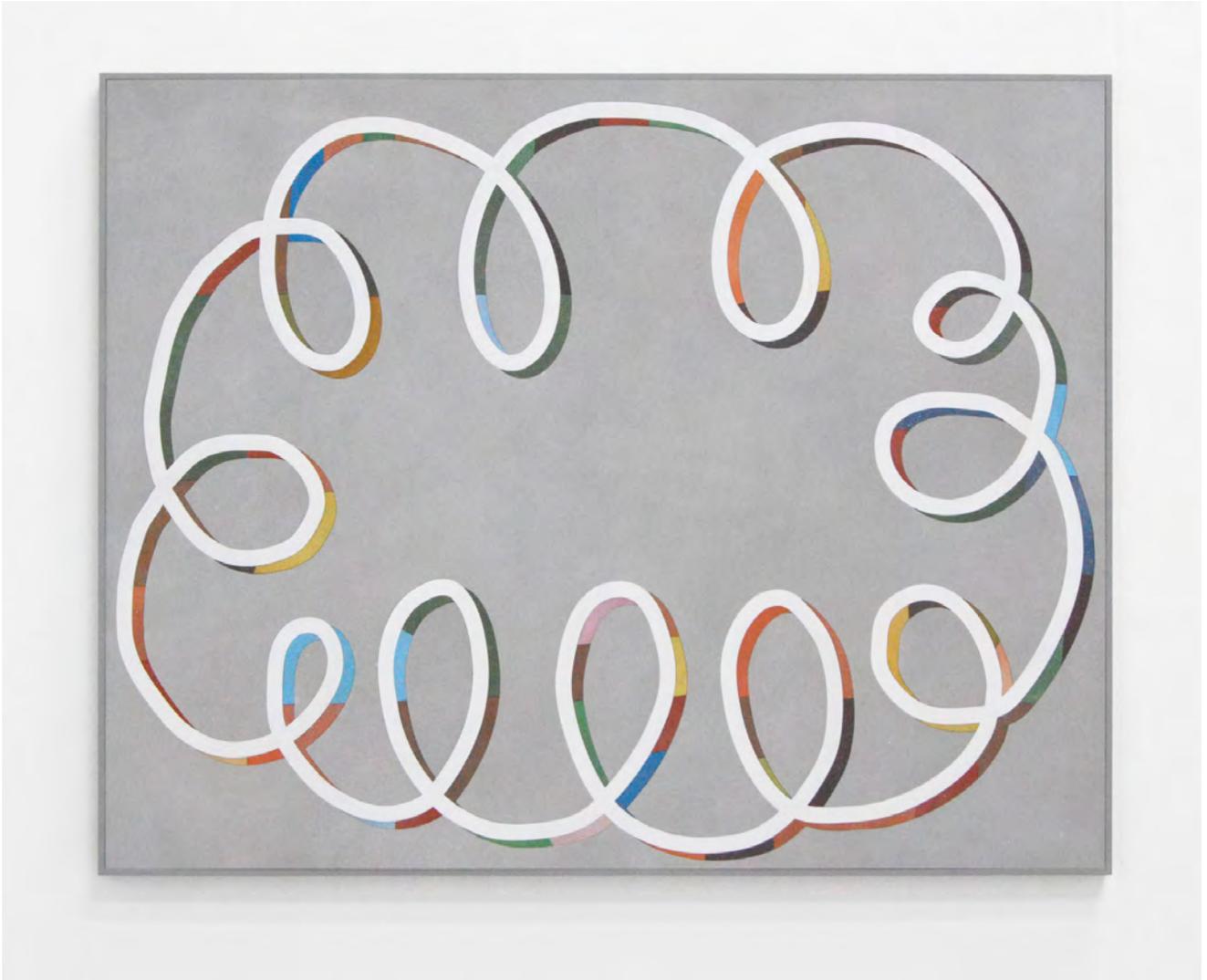


*Mischievousness Made Magical May Make Modesty More Malleable*, 2016  
Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board  
37 3/8 x 37 3/8 inches (95 x 95 cm)



*On Mercury's Cool Cat*, 2016  
Enamel, spray paint and acrylic on board  
20 1/8 x 20 1/8 inches (51 x 51 cm)





*It's alright, we can still go on, 2014*  
Spray paint, acrylic and chalk on board  
24 x 20 1/8 inches (61 x 51 cm)



*Shame on you (if you can't dance, too)*, 2014  
Spray paint and acrylic on board  
24 x 20 1/8 inches (61 x 51 cm)

SELECTED PRESS

## Rhys Coren: Shape of Story review

Eddy Frankel | 2019



Photo by Damian Griffiths.

The worst people on earth are the ones who take the tube from Covent Garden to Leicester Square. They have no idea what they're missing. London is a walking city. These damp, polluted streets are built for trudging down; you're *meant* to slap your feet on the pavement and make the city your own.

Young English artist Rhys Coren knows that. He walks to his studio every day down south London streets, under lush plane trees, through choking smog, past rushed graffiti and the hulking heft of this town's bulky architecture.

It's walking that ties this show together. The opening room is full of primary coloured works made from precisely cut and puzzled-together MDF. The abstract squiggles are exhaust fumes belching out of a cab, meandering coloured lines are Coren's thoughts tumbling together as he walks. There are little hints of the shadows of trees, the alternating patterns of paving stones, the taut, straight lines of buildings.

One work is a series of curves hiding the word 'seahorse', the nickname for the hippocampus, the bit of the brain triggered into releasing endorphins by walking. Coren's new work is a little mindful, and a little neurotic.

The second room is a primary colour playpen showing an animation of walking feet, the sound of the city chuntering out of nearby speakers. My only real qualm is that this room, which makes the whole show make sense, comes after you've already dealt with the paintings.

His aesthetic is what makes this special though. It's a collision of Matisse, Albers and 'Sesame Street'. Like 1990s cartoons mashed together with classic colour theory. It's all these visual cues we've grown up with, condensed down and spat out. They're these awesome little bursts of aesthetic thinking, controlled explosions of colour, shape and thought.

And you get the sense that Coren really needs these walks. He needs the time and space to think and breathe, to be alone, to be in his own space. We all do, really. It's just that most of us aren't good enough to turn that necessity into really good art.

## Putting The “You” in Color: Rhys Coren’s Fuzzy Familiarity

February 21, 2019

Some of the best feelings are damn-near impossible to put into words. Even trained wordsmiths and masters of prose have admitted their own failure to capture the truest forms of our most deeply-held emotions, like love, despair, and joy, because if they're named, they lose some of the individuality we bestow upon them. Rhys Coren describes the work he most enjoys and the work he aims to create as communicating a "fuzzy sense of familiarity," regardless of how unnamable that familiarity may be. In a way, I think that's as close as we can get, but with a wide array of colors, textures, mediums, shapes, and sizes, Coren gets closer than many. His work can feel both brooding and playful, often creating unique symbols that show up continuously, weaving together his own visual language that greets viewers with that same fuzzy embrace.



**Your work contains a lot of symbols, or at least they look like symbols, do they represent things like a word does, or are they more loosely associated?**

In the most reductive sense, the reason I make and hope to show my work is to communicate and connect with others. That sounds quite cheesy, but I'm coming to terms with that. I want to communicate, but I want to do it in a way that is adjacent to written or verbal language. By that I mean I wish to communicate in a way that isn't quite so linear and singular but allows multiple narratives about multiple things in various states of completeness to coexist. Work I respond to most conjures up a sense of familiarity without me being able to put my finger on what's familiar, and the way I want to connect with others is through this fuzzy sense of familiarity. It's visceral. Which is odd, as I am overly cerebral in most other parts of my life.

In my work, I always have a literal starting point, referencing personal memories and historical moments alongside design and music. But, over the last 8 or 9 years, through the reduction and editing of source material in an attempt to refine it into a more basic but still recognizable form, I started to develop my own visual language. By stripping back the more obvious signifiers, I realized the potential for personal or culturally specific material to go through a process that distilled it into something more universal. Instead of pointing at things, I could find a fuzzy essence. As I made more work like this, a feedback loop of all the edited references caused cross-contamination and further evolution, eventually leading to the development of certain motifs and symbols that have their own personal etymology. The meanings shift a little. Or, more accurately, they can have multiple meanings at once. I find the idea of semiotics quite daunting, but I like allegory and metaphor a lot. I find I have to jolt myself back into this world every so often, though, as I don't want to get too lost in the rabbit hole that my work sets up: Stuff > Work about stuff > Work about work about stuff > Work about work about work about stuff, and so on. This is exactly what my most recent solo show at Grimm's New York space was about. For that group of paintings, I rewound a few years to a decision I made to take the drawn line out of the work and, simply, put it back in. After years of evolving into a kind of abstraction, it felt necessary to be a bit more literal. The line sets up an immediate and unambiguous connection to cartoon images, with each work being made by collaging stills from a range of different animated works, from avant-garde film from the 30s to 80s TV. Then there are original drawings in there, too. But you never lose that directness of the line.

**What's the oldest piece of your own artwork that you have? When did you make it?**

I have many old hard-drives filled with impressively bad animated work from as far back as 2007. In terms of physical, analogue things, I have a painting from 2014. Or, rather, my girlfriend has that painting, but, in our house, so I sort of have it. It was her favourite work from my interim show during my postgraduate course. It's called '*It's alright, we can still go on*', which are lyrics from a Cymande song, and was inspired by the World Unknown parties thrown by Andy Blake and Joe Hart. Christ, they were wild.



## **Do you paint to music? What's your favorite album to paint to?**

I work to music. To say I 'paint' to music might suggest I hold a brush and react in a romantic or lyrical way. I probably do that when drawing, but all my paintings - and I call them paintings because they are wall-based things with paint, even though I don't technically paint, my works will start as drawings that are scanned, collaged, flattened and vectorized, then cut into board with a laser or a water-jet before being coloured and textured by slowly misting paint over each piece. Then I assemble the pieces and glue them. The actual painting bit is probably the only bit where I can't listen to music because I have a giant extractor fan on. Walking to and from the studio, drawing, framing and gluing is done to loud, hypnotic, rhythmical music. I go for walks most days, as I find them meditative while listening to DJ mixes by Bahamian Moor, Alexis Le Tan, Fervent Moon, Radio Jiro, Nixon and John Arthur Zahl. Plus mixes and playlists I make myself. As an ongoing project, I've been collecting songs of all genres with the word 'love' in the title, intermittently making mixes out of them. Then, if it's really late and I'm having a beer in the studio, Veronica Vasicka is a good way of seeing out the night.

## **What's your process of naming a piece? Your titles are excellent by the way...**

Any idea I have is either drawn or written down first. Most ideas require both a sketch and word or two in order to make sense on a later re-reading, with images annotating words as often as the other way around. While the drawing side of things is more direct in the paintings and animations, the titles provide a perfect place for snippets of the writing. Most of it I've authored, but a lot of the writing is appropriated from overheard conversations, misheard disco lyrics and John Cooper Clarke poetry, then chopped up and edited or embellished in a way that's not so dissimilar to the imagery in my paintings. Most of the time the title relates to the inspiration for that work, but a lot of time they just serve to anchor the work in the real with some of that linear, singular language I spoke about wanting to avoid in the paintings. And it's often a way to set a tone for a sort of rhythm with phonetics or rhyme. It's amazing how simultaneously crucial and unimportant a title can be.

## **The colors in your work have this almost washed-out feeling, when did you start using those types of tones? What's something that draws you to that?**

I love colour and colourful things, but I feel very uncomfortable with really bright colour. So, in order to make colours pop and zing and work together, I spend a lot of time looking at Josef Albers' *Interaction of Color* plates. They have a full set in the archives of the Royal Academy of Arts where I did my postgrad. It's amazing what greyish but lemony yellows can do to dull violets. Or peachy yellows alongside aqua blues. Also, work that's really bright, or large in scale for that matter, pushes me back. I want closeness and intimacy in my paintings. Saying that, the Peter Halley piece at Dallas airport recently blew my mind. It was enormous and bright. As a side note, I've been sat here for a few minutes trying to make a joke about the British and American spellings of colour / color. Like, 'You and Josef really take the 'u' out of color.' But Josef actually puts the 'you' in colour. That's why I'm a huge Albers fan.



## **What's one piece of visual art that has had a notable effect on you?**

What's interesting about that question is that my initial answer was, "Too many to mention." But, in the moments since I first read it, it's niggled away at me, and I've convinced myself that there could be a seminal work. Or, rather, a string of successive seminal works for different stages in my life. Tony and Beverly Conrad's *Straight and Narrow* film had an enormous effect on me. Mark Leckey's *Fiorucci Made Me Hardcore* and *Boogie Woogie* by Normal McLaren. Several Cyprien Gaillard films have blown me away like no other artwork has. Jeremy Deller's *Acid Brass*. I often think about Elizabeth Murray and Mary Heilmann shows in New York and London respectively. The Stuart Davis one at The Whitney is one of my most favorite exhibition experiences ever. Dia: Beacon and Marfa have shaped my thinking a lot. Those places change you. Same with the Josef and Anni Albers Foundation. Especially if you are British and you've not experienced the rural settings for each of those places before. Then there's the work of Chris Johanson and Barry McGee, both of whom inspired me during my BFA days to think outside of the British shock-factor box that was going on at that time. Oh, and I mustn't leave out Peter Davis' list paintings and early abstracts. Or Group Material. Then there's Haring, Stella, Tauba-Arp, Lewitt, Judd, Klee, Hilma af Klint, Matta-Clark, the Chicago Imagists and, of course, Memphis and Nathalie du Pasquier have all rewired me over the years.

## **How do you stay productive? What's one non-survival related motivator in your life?**

Art gives me purpose and meaning and that motivates me. And it's my job. The more I

# JUXTAPOZ

work, the happier I am. That's an insanely privileged position to be in, especially where I come from, and I fully respect that luck is a major factor in that. When handed opportunities like this, it's best to make the most of every minute in the studio in case the proverbial rug gets pulled out anytime soon. And, let's face it, chances are it will.



**I saw you posted a video of you riding a BMX bike from a while back, is that something you've done for a while? Were you in a scene with other bikers?**

From 13 or 14 years old, I was more or less feral, hanging out on the streets or in various skateparks. The things you see and experience in city centers at night are incredible, especially at that age from a safe-ish sideline. I had enormous freedom and was in-part raised by the BMX and skate scene. It offered an alternative to the more typical route for teenagers in my hometown. Where I grew up, in Plymouth, on the South West coast of England, anyone that

wasn't in the navy, fought people at football matches or had a 'proper job' were considered anomalies. So all the BMXers, skaters, motocrossers, surfers and moshers hung out together, mostly for protection in numbers. We even had to buddy-up with goths on occasion, sharing the one bar and one nightclub that would allow scruffy dressers in. I was fortunate that a lot of my friends were some of the best BMXers in the country, if not the world, so we got to travel all over the UK and even parts of Europe. I think being a BMXer or skater adapts you to live as an artist quite well, as you learn that your development and enjoyment relies on individual dedication within a community. You also get used to being poor in a trade-off for time. Actually, BMX is what inspired me go to art school in an attempt

# JUXTAPOZ

to keep on BMXing and live somewhere else. I literally chose my BFA in Bristol based on proximity to skateparks. Luckily it was also a great BFA.

I'm too old to do it now, though. My body has given up and, quite frankly, the way modern BMXers speak and dress make me feel really old. I like using full grammar in text messages and I still dress like Lou Rajsich or 90s Ed Templeton. White socks, Dickies, and semicolons.

## **Congrats on becoming a father, by the way, has having a kid changed the way you work much?**

Thanks!! I'm back full-time in the studio after 6 months of intermittent bits and bobs and mostly animating at home which is awesome. Working from home made me make some quite bleak, silent, black and white animations. I think that's because I almost completely stopped listening to music and got really into all the Brexit politics we have going on. I figured that only knowing a bit was more torturous than diving in and trying to understand every sneaky move by every slippery politician. I actively wanted to increase knowledge and consciousness. There's nothing blissful about ignorance when your country is self-destructing. For the first time, I was thinking about a world my child has to grow up in. That led to all sorts of tangents on social and cultural reading, especially social mobility and mental health in working-class communities. By accident, I sort of addressed a minor identity crisis I didn't even realize I was having, heightened by the introspective awareness a child inspires. I was quite the bleak dinner guest for a while. Luckily, no one invited me to dinner. But, now, more than ever, I realize making pleasurable work about life's little pleasures is entirely necessary. My work is a place politics can't touch, fuelled by my defiance and anger. It's not apolitical because it's not apathetic, it's deliberately anti-political. So, no, it hasn't changed the way I work too much, but my resolve and belief in art have strengthened considerably.

## Rhys Coren: Think About It Later

Phil Treagus | 2017



**Rhys Coren is a multidisciplinary artist who switches between mediums like animation, performance, writing or painted marquetry, and is represented by Seventeen Gallery. With a postgraduate diploma from the Royal Academy of Art, Rhys displays an obvious pleasure in rhythm, form, colour and texture, space and negative space. Rhys Coren describes the direct link between his experience of music and the visual language of his practice, crediting the structure and strategies found in electronic dance music, jazz and disco as the genesis of the works. His recent exhibitions include click, click, click-clap-click, a solo exhibition at galeriepcp, Paris, in December 2016, and Whistle Bump Super Strut, a solo exhibition at Seventeen, London in March 2017. Rhys Coren also recently curated the group exhibition Cuts, Shapes, Breaks and Scrapes at Seventeen, London alongside Gabriel Hartley and he has co-founded curatorial projects including Opening Times and bubblebyte.org. Please enjoy this interview with the talented artist Rhys Coren...**

**When someone asks you ‘what do you do for a living?’ – How do you respond?**

More often than not, I pause for an uncomfortable amount of time... then make a bit of a face... then finally say, “Artist.” Not because I am embarrassed about my job, but more because I am still so excited, and confused, and amazed that it is possible. It’s quite new, and it hasn’t really sunk in.

**What are you reading at the moment?**

Two books. One is a collection of essays and exhibition reviews by the artist Donald Judd, simply entitled *Donald Judd Writings* by Flavin Judd. The other is *New Art City* by Jed Perl. That one is about the art scene in Manhattan in the mid-20th Century.

## **When you think about your childhood, what book comes to mind?**

*The Twits* by Roald Dahl. To this day, I still make references to that marvellous guide to petty revenge. Adding slices of wood to a walking stick to make someone think they are shrinking. Genius.

## **What did you want to be when you were growing up?**

This may sound odd... but I didn't really want to be anything. I just wanted to draw or watch TV or play football in the street. That's not to say that I was deliberately unambitious. It was more that I didn't know what ambition was. I had no concept of it. I never thought about much beyond that moment. When I've told people that in the past, they've laughed, saying, "You're still doing that." They probably have a point.

## **Did you demonstrate an affinity with art as a child?**

Drawing, yes. It was all I was good at and my favourite thing to do. But I was 18 before I was exposed or introduced to what I recognise as 'art' (as in fine art) and I was 23 before I started to get my head around it.

## **What do you think your school aged self would think of the present day you?**

It would be too much for school aged me to handle. Being a child from a pretty modest background in a small naval city, living a creative life in the multicultural, liberal capital would seem like an alternative reality. Like inter-dimensional travel.

## **If you could wrap up a single book and gift it to yourself as you left education - which book would it be?**

*Eats, Shoots and Leaves* by Lynne Truss. I didn't really do very well at school with anything other than art. This excellent little book opened up a world of enjoyment in the written word that had previously felt beyond me. It made me feel more confident to read and write than 7 years of secondary education had.

## **Does your reading have routine? Is there a particular time or place that you like to read?**

I find reading very difficult. I have an incredibly visual imagination, and the visualising tends to lead to daydreaming and, before I know it, long periods of time have elapsed and I can't remember what it is I just read. Handy for being a visual artist, but awful for actually reading and digesting what you read. I tend to find, though, that scenarios void of other stimulus seem to help. Or, times at which I am seriously bored and have nothing to hand but a book.

So before bed or on buses. Or waiting for my tea to brew of a morning. Or holidays. I can read my annual quota in a week on holiday. Also, this difficulty with reading is probably why I love non-fiction or short stories and poetry. Shorter prose inspires less daydreaming.

## **Which book has had the biggest impact on your career so far? How did it impact it?**

*Ten Years in an Open Necked Shirt* by John Cooper Clarke. Condensing all that emotion and the universality of the everyday into something so short and punchy and memorable. The pace and rhythm of each poem, too. The character. It's magical, and great inspiration for trying to make a painting with the same potency; the same economy of means. To get so much from so little.

## **What two pieces of advice would you give a young aspiring artist?**

My advice is directed specifically at young, working class people aspiring to become artists... and that is, never become too disheartened by the enormous gulf in wealth and resource available to the vast majority of the other people you'll encounter on your journey. This means the other students, not just collectors and patrons. Use what appears to be a financial disadvantage to your advantage, and work harder than any of them. Just work, work, work and work some more. From the minute your eyes open until they eventually shut. Use any negative feelings as fuel to work even more. There is no amount of privilege or social ease and innate networking ability that can outshine amazing work, and that comes from hours and hours of relentless practice. Let who you are into the work, too. It will give it character.

## **Who would you say are the three artists that continue to inspire you?**

I would swap out one name of one well-known artist for a conglomerate of my artist friends. I get more from them than any person from history. So, 'my friends' is the first person. Then I would say Mary Heilmann. Then Mark Leckey.

## **Do you have any books that you strongly associate with someone important in your life?**

Not in any sort of serious or meaningful way. I have read a lot of footballers' autobiographies, each reminding me of a friend who may support a team the footballer played for.

## **What book have you recommended the most to friends and family?**

*Pirates and Farmers* by Dave Hickey.

## **Do you prefer fiction or non-fiction?**

I prefer non-fiction.

## **Do you think reading is important?**

Of course.

## **What's the best book you've read in the last 6 months?**

Either *Confessions of an Art Addict* by Peggy Guggenheim... or *On Being An Artist* by Sir Michael Craig-Martin, a collection of almost-autobiographical-but-not-quite writings by the knighted artist.

## **Do you prefer real books or digital books?**

Real. Although I am just entering into the first 'desperately need reading glasses' phase of my life, which has seen me reading more and more digital books on account of the zooming. I have an eye test booked for next week, though. Then I'll be back on paper.

## **Do you think there is a relationship between books and art?**

A huge one. From artist monographs to collections of essays and reviews, I am yet to find an artist without an extension collection of books. Yes, 90% of the pages probably have pictures on, but the relationship between artist and book is a of great historical and contemporary relevance. It was how both the visual representation and analysis of work could be distributed.

## **Name a book that you feel everyone would benefit from reading and explain why.**

*Outliers* by Malcolm Gladwell is pretty superb. *Jung: A Biography* by Deirdre Bair is also pretty illuminating.

## **What is the book that you feel has had the single biggest impact on your life? What impact did it have?**

*The New Neurotic Realism* exhibition catalogue. I discovered this in my first week of Art Foundation at Plymouth College of Art and Design. This was my first glimpse into what contemporary fine art was. The goalposts shifted from GCSE and A-Level Art to actual, proper, fine art... and I liked it.

## **Are there any books you haven't mentioned that you feel would make your reading list?**

*Bliss To Be Alive* by Gavin Hills and *Cat's Pyjamas* by David Robilliard.

## **What books or subject matter do you plan on reading in the next year?**

As soon as I get my reading glasses, everything and anything I can get my hands on.

## **If you were to write an autobiography - what would it be called?**

This is a great game to play in the pub. One of my friends suggested calling my autobiography: *Think About It Later*. It was ironic, though. Because of my impatience.

## Marcelle Joseph Interviews Artist Rhys Coren

Marcelle Joseph | March 23, 2017



'Buzz', 'Snap!', 'Rockit', 'Up all night', 'Cheeky, cheeky. Naughty, sneaky', 'Dance the dance, dancing feet' – a few of the titles of artworks Rhys Coren has made over the last year.

These titles are telling glimpses into this multidisciplinary artist's creative practice that is inspired by 80's electronic dance music, jazz and disco as well as his own experiences as a dancefloor habitué. Coren works across animation, writing, performance and painted marquetry, each medium flaunting its affinity with rhythm and the artist's undying love affair with drawing. Form, colour and texture are integral to the strength of Coren's painted, wall-based panels of interlocking board. The wall works may contain cartoon-like clouds broken up by grids of spray-painted colour and

texture, overlaying the works with a cheeky sense of humour.

On the occasion of Coren's first solo show at Seventeen (10<sup>th</sup> March – 15<sup>th</sup> April 2017), Marcelle Joseph talks to Coren about life as an artist in London.

**You had a big break between your BA and your postgraduate studies at the RA Schools where you graduated in 2016. Now you're grafting away alone in your studio in Elephant & Castle. What's life like in the real world as a working artist after your cushy three-years in Mayfair at the RA?**

It was quite a big break, yes. But I was always making art and always trying to contribute to whatever community I was part of. I worked collaboratively mostly, with different independent and artist-led initiatives, even curatorially at times. But I was always working. I needed that time, though, as I was a bit of a slow-starter.

Those years after my BA, first in Bristol then in London, juggling all manner of shitty jobs and debt as I also tried to educate myself further on art... contribute to whatever... and build myself a practice... were terrifying and financially very stressful. But they allowed me to appreciate more the things I already loved, and I began to make work about those things as a result... indulging my pleasures in music, animation, design and sub-culture. I also began to lean more on skills and techniques I enjoyed most, encouraging a DIY, self-sufficiency. This was a huge breakthrough for me.

Getting into the Royal Academy came soon after this breakthrough. This was seven years after completing my BA and I was 30 years old. I'd made the first body of work that I was truly proud of, and I'd managed it whilst living in London with next to no money and no formal structure whatsoever. All I could think about was how much more I could do with the support the RA offered. So, once there, I spent every day of those three years like it was my last. I lapped up everything I possibly could - everything about the school, the library, the student-run bar, the Royal Academy itself, the statue of Sir Joshua Reynolds, the postcode. It was amazing. It blew my mind, and it was one of the most amazing experiences of my life.

Despite this, leaving the RA was almost as exciting as getting in. That may sound surprising coming from someone who waxes lyrical about the place at every opportunity, but life there is about this intense introspection and analysis. Your week is heavily timetabled, and you have a responsibility to the rest of your year group to be present and engaging. That's not always the most productive environment for outright making. That's what I am ready for now. The Royal Academy defined who I was for a long time, but really it was just a phase, like the phase before. Now, this new phase is the Elephant and Castle phase... The *Plaza Plaza* phase. A phase I'm loving, working from a small, independent, artist-run studio with an exhibition space out front, tucked away off the New Kent Road. Glen Pudvine carrying on the great work of the now USA-based Jesse Wine, the artist who set it up in 2011.

I think it is important to dispel this myth that the RA or Mayfair is 'cushy' for everyone. As a student there, you are definitely one of the lucky few. But getting into the RA by no means ensures an easy time, either. It's a total headfuck coming from a modest background and being surrounded by the most extreme wealth. Its location, for many, means long and overcrowded commutes and never before experienced problems getting materials. Some students really feel the pressure of the wider RA institution, and you are all different ages and at different stages in your development (though, weirdly, these were some of the things that drew me to it). But, one thing the RA can ensure is it will do everything it can to support you, and you will almost certainly be a better artist for going. How much better depends on you. The more you give it, the more it gives back.

As for the 'real world', even when I was doing the bare minimum of the shitty work required to pay rent, like painting a warehouse floor at 5am, or cleaning a nightclub wall at 4am, I felt lucky. To have a focus... to have the option to make and think about art... to avoid the 'real'. I

don't think I've been in the real world since my first day of my Foundation Diploma at Plymouth College of Art in 2001.



**Your wall-based works are feats of engineering genius with the most amazing textured colour. Could you explain your process and how music and drawing fit in?**

I feel uncomfortable thinking of these things as genius. I would agree that the work has a strange eloquence once it is finished. Something I find 'strange' because I know about all the stages leading up to it hanging on a wall. They're really quite modest and scrappy, even.

The process is one that, instead of trying to fight my odd, compulsive behaviour, completely embraces it through compartmentalising the picture making process. It makes a weakness a strength. To break everything down into stages, then to break the picture surface down into pieces; it's a way of working that I find so much more productive, whilst also allowing me to care for every individual part of a picture. Every graphic component can be held in my hand, slowly textured and pigmented, allowing an intimacy with the work I hadn't really felt before.

Music has been material, content, motivation and fuel for the work. By that, I mean that early works were about actual songs or memories experienced during specific music. Animated work often has music in it. And, even when the work is inspired by something

entirely different, listening to music helps me work. Hoping that the rhythm of the music can creep into the imagery. Music has also been a handy metaphor for understanding how to make and relate to a picture, too. Thinking about tone, texture, harmony, rhythm, pitch.

I am just as much inspired by the written and spoken word, traveling around London, design and old animated films as I am music. It's just that I listen to music, a very certain type of music, for most of the time I am in the studio. Occasionally, watching old films as I work, especially animated ones. But the music I listen to is music that has the power to cast a spell over your body and alter your mood. People who make dance music know they have made good dance music through the involuntary reactions the body makes. The same can be said for people who write comedy. Art doesn't have anything quite so specific or exaggerated in terms of bodily response. It can be far slower burning, too. I guess I like the idea that a work can make you dance or smile before you yourself have even worked out if it interests you on a more conscious level.

**Last year at the RA Schools, as part of an Open Studios evening, you presented a performance where two jazz musicians improvised an arrangement according to the rhythms of a two-screen animated video you made. Was that an important and pivotal work for you - mixing live music with your animated video work? Do you plan on continuing in this vein in the future?**

Yes and yes. I actually staged that performance again with a saxophone player in the summer, and I am working on a new animated work to be scored by musicians. But, rather than it be one, continuous piece, it will be broken down into chapters with different music and musicians depending on the character of each chapter. I can see it taking a few years to do.

The musicians I worked with were Gary Crosby, Moses Boyd and Binker Golding of Tomorrow's Warriors (amongst other projects), a huge youth jazz orchestra who are based at Southbank Centre. I sometimes stop for a wee there on the way home and had the luck to hear them one day. Working with them was one of the most inspiring and humbling experiences I've ever had. True magicians. Their dedication to their craft has taught me a lot.

**In December 2016 at a solo show in Paris at galeriepcp, you presented a new animated video work alongside your wall-based works for the first time. At a studio visit, you mentioned to me how it was important for the two media to be presented in different spaces in the gallery. Can you talk about that and why the separation is important to you?**

I can't read a book when the TV is on or music is playing. I find that the imaginative space I enter to read is very similar to how I would look at a painting. So, by that logic, I find it hard to look at a painting whilst moving image or sound is playing close by. I feel that literal, real-time, durational work snaps me out of my own imagination. But, equally, the hypnotic,

transformative qualities that moving image and sound have are something I feel very excited about. It is just that the real-time sort of bullies the imaginative. There may be room soon to deliberately butt the two together at some point, finding energy in the clash. Who knows? But, for now, I feel there is much more to gain from keeping one over here, and one over there.

**How did you approach your first solo show at Seventeen entitled “Whistle Bump Super Strut”? Given that your wall-based work has a vibrating pulse of its own, is the curation of the works across the space important to you?**

Very much so, but in a space this large... or ‘spaces’ plural, I should say... it is less about a rhythm created through the quick succession of works in a line or circumference. That’s something I have played with in the past, as each work is generally quite individual and a sequential reading can be interesting. But, the larger size and dividing wall at Seventeen allows each work to have a huge amount of space around it. So I have thought about the show in terms of connections between works in the two different rooms, each one sharing one or more characteristics from another work in the other room. It is like a puzzle in my head. A little like the surfaces of the individual works. It isn’t meant to be a puzzle that needs solving. It’s more of a gentle guide from my end, to help ease the work into an otherwise quite daunting space.



There's a Dave Hickey idea that crops up in both *Air Guitar* and *Pirates and Farmers*, about how artists should 'think in shows'. That really struck me. And, since leaving the RA, it is an idea that has really influenced my thinking. For both the recent galeriepcp show, and the Seventeen show, I made mock ups of the space, so that, at the very least, I had a subconscious blueprint guiding the individual works. This doesn't cement the works in any sort of order, either, but creates a set of moves should something not work or need to be swapped over. There's a balance I look for.

**Your next outing is Frieze New York in May... As an artist whose work is presented to different global audiences, do you think about that when making the work? Can the history of a place where you are showing impact on the work (e.g., New York is where disco was born)?**

Generally... no. I think that, whilst my practice is largely described as abstract, almost all the work is in some way rooted in something real; something inextricably British or perceived through the lens of Britishness. But, over years and years of reduction, I seem to be left with the essence of an image or sound – a sort of familiarity without being able to directly pinpoint the reference. For me, then, it is interesting to see how that is received abroad. Whether or not the work can translate. Maybe it is more accurate to say that I do think about it, but that the history of the place I am showing the work in doesn't directly affect what I make, although I think I feel less inhibited because it isn't in London, seen by my closest friends and mentors. I massively underestimated the effect of that pressure for *Whistle Bump Super Strut*. By the end, I'd lost all objectivity and developed both a Berocca addiction and nervous twitch in my left eyelid.

HOWEVER, New York is probably the one exception, as it is somewhere I think about a lot. I think it affects what I make anyway. Growing up, my favourite music was from there, my favourite artists were from there, and my favourite BMX and skate videos were all set there. I think NY is special like that, in that you can feel you know it without ever going there. So, when I finally got the chance to go in my mid-20s, instead of the Empire State or Statue of Liberty, I made little tourist trips to the sites of Warhol's Factory, the Cedar Tavern, Brooklyn Banks, Studio 54, The Loft, Paradise Garage, CBGBs and the corner of 53<sup>rd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> from The Ramones song. New York exceeded my wildest expectations, and I have been infatuated with it ever since.

We found out that we got into Frieze late last year, so I wouldn't be surprised if that infatuation added a little optimism to the work for *Whistle Bump*. The summery feel of disco emanating from a wintery basement in London. Maybe, then, for Frieze New York, I need to take a slice of drizzly, grey London to even the score.

### **Captions**

Individual works and installation views from Rhys Coren's solo exhibition, *Whistle Bump Super Strut*, at Seventeen, London (10<sup>th</sup> March – 15<sup>th</sup> April 2017), courtesy of the artist and Seventeen, London, Photo: Damian Griffiths.

## "Music almost always fuels the work": multidisciplinary artist Rhys Coren on his latest show

Byrony Stone | March 14, 2017



Multidisciplinary artist Rhys Coren is constantly switching between mediums, but whether he's working in animation or writing, performance or painting, his work pulsates with an inescapable rhythm.

Since finishing a postgraduate diploma at the Royal Academy of Art, Rhys has displayed work at a solo exhibition at Parisian gallery *galeriepcp*, and tried his hand as a curator of group exhibition *Cuts, Shapes, Breaks and Scrapes* at Kingsland Road's Seventeen Gallery as well as in projects *Opening Times* and *bubblebyte.org*.

For his current solo show at Seventeen Gallery *Whistle Bump Super Strut*, Rhys has been translating clouds straight out of *The Simpsons* and patterns so structured they reveal a mathematical precision. He paints onto wooden boards in enamel, acrylic and spray paint, a process which he tells us he's been honing for eight years. With titles like *Pop, times two, measure the beat. Dance the dance, dancing feet*, Rhys' wooden canvases carry a depth belied by their apparent simplicity.

We caught up with the London-based artist to find out more about the relationship between music and visual art in his work.

# It's Nice That

**You work across animation, writing, performance and painted marquetry — tell us how each of the mediums play into one another. Do music and lyrics affect the making of each painting? Do you see visual art and language as innately different creative forms?**

I think that each medium has something inherent in it that allows me to engage with rhythm in a slightly different way. The performances are musical performances, the animation uses frame rate and musical tempo as a structure, the paintings attempt to have a visual, formal rhythm, and the writing plays on phonetics and rhyme a lot.

Music affects my work a great deal. It can be the content of a work: memories I have of people or experiences heavily linked with particular tracks for example. Some works are inspired by lyrics, which I then expand through writing I do. But whatever it is, music almost always fuels the work, in that I listen to a lot of music — various forms of dance music from the last 50 years or so. A song or track from this period and genre can really cast a spell, causing involuntary responses in both my mind and body. A sort of bliss and joy. A desire to dance. I like the idea that by feeling that feeling as I make something, some of that will translate into the finished work.

As for seeing visual art and language as different forms. I'm not sure it is that simple. I think as visual forms as language, and I think of language as a visual form.

**Why, for your first solo exhibition, have you chosen to work with paint on wooden board?**

It's a process I have been developing on and off for about eight years. A way of making that allows me to slow down and compartmentalise the picture-making process. I chop a drawing up into its individual graphic components, then work on each piece individually. I can hold it in my hand. Slowly texturing and colouring, before assembling all the pieces again. A friend and mentor of mine who worked as a fabricator saw me making animations in a similar fashion, and he encouraged me to try and make something physical with the same designs, and chopping up board and spray painting it that way.

It's hard to explain, but as a way of making, it feels more in tune with how I think. Everything happens in stages. I feel I have more in common with a screen printer than someone who paints with a brush.

This is the medium that I'm most excited by showing at the moment, and have the most momentum with. It's the medium I think in most of the time. Each one I finish inspires two more.

**Across language and visual art, your work holds a very solid sense of structure. How do you go about composing each piece?**

It's not all that conscious a process. and I rely quite heavily on intuition. But breaking the making down into stages, compartmentalising, thinking about rhythm and rhyme, and

# It's Nice That

combinations of texture and colour... are all things that are innate in who I am. I guess the last few years have been a process of unearthing what it is that makes me me. And structure is something I keep coming back to.

## **Can you tell us a bit about the text composing Titles? Is it written to exist in full as a poem? Do any poets in particular inspire your linguistic work?**

I write a lot. From single words, to phrases, lists, shapes, individual letters, even essay-like text that acts as a sort of diary to developments in my work. The words can be my own, but more often than not start from something overheard or directly listened to as a lyric. The writings are kept chronologically, and in doing so interesting patterns occur through that chance. I guess I wanted to filter the writing into some other sort of structure to generate new patterns and coincidence. For this press release, putting the writings — in this case titles of work I have made in the last few years — into an ascending order based on length, it did just that. Not only are there patterns in potential meaning and syllabic and phonetic structure, the rhythm evolves as the writings become longer, each new line a little longer than the one above.

David Robilliard as both an artist and poet is someone I admire a lot. Bukowski's *Last Night of the Earth* book has had a great affect too.

## **What music were you listening to while creating work for Whistle Bump Super Strut?**

I listen to a lot of mixes. A lot of NTS shows. Namely, Bahamian Moor, Fervent Moon, Radio Jiro, John Arthur Zhal and Alexis Le Tan mixes. Noise in My Head. Test Pressing. Horse Meat Disco. I go off on Youtube's 'recommended next' tangents for days. A mix I had on repeat was Slow and Synth by J.A.Z., plus some old Larry Levan and David Mancuso mixes.



Rhys Coren: *Go bang*

## **And finally, which artists do you look to for inspiration?**

I have a pile of books on my studio desk that changes almost daily. Currently, it has several Mary Heilmann books, then Josef Albers, Elizabeth Murray, Hilma af Klint, Frank Stella, Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Nathalie du Pasquier, Lillian F. Schwartz and Oskar Fischinger.

## Rhys Coren: Whistle Bump Super Strut at Seventeen Gallery, London

Caroline Douglas | March 10, 2017



Installation view of Rhys Coren: Whistle Bump Super Strut at Seventeen Gallery. Courtesy of Seventeen Gallery. Photographer: Damian Griffiths

I visited first thing in the morning, before the opening. Cases of Red Stripe were stacked by the door and the unpolished concrete floor would probably get a sweep before the crowds arrived a few hours later. Maybe not. But the show was up, and had been photographed a couple of days before. “I like the idea that a work can make you dance or smile immediately before you yourself have even worked out if it interests you on more conscious levels.” That is certainly what happened to me as I walked from one picture to the next. They reveal themselves rather slowly – you need to move in quite close to figure out that these are not straightforward painted forms, but constructed from multiple, laser-cut panels, individually spray painted. It is a form of marquetry, and once you zero in on the way each element fits with the next, the precision is mind-bending and intensely pleasing.

Rhys Coren graduated from the RA Schools last year. While the works at Seventeen Gallery are referred to as paintings, I am assured that no paintbrushes are involved. The hand of the artist is suppressed through both of the mechanical techniques he uses: spray painting



Rhys Coren, Cupid Cars, 2017. Spray paint, acrylic and pencil on board, 55.6 x 40.7 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Seventeen Gallery. Photographer: Damian Griffiths

and laser cutting. While at the Royal Academy Coren became intensely interested in the work of Josef Albers, and this was perhaps an influence in turning him away from more obviously 'painterly' forms of self-expression and towards a different kind of exploration. Albers' colour theory has also been an important influence on Coren's palette. As you go in close to look at the works you realise that each panel, each colour, is in fact a composite: a ground overlaid with a veil of microscopic points of contrasting tone.

Another key reference in Coren's work is Postmodernism and in particular the Memphis design group, whose irreverent spirit, candy colours and freewheeling geometric patterning typified the 1980s. By the time Coren was growing up, mainstream culture had assimilated the design values of Memphis' founder, Ettore Sottsass: "even clothing worn by the presenters and characters in the TV I watched as a child looked like Memphis

group stuff", he has said. Coren credits these childhood experiences with giving him a lifelong fascination with pattern, combined with a love of the funk and soul music of the period that feeds into the abstract motifs he creates. There is rhythm here – because the forms are hand drawn before being laser cut from panel, one feels the speed of the hand across the plane, imagines the pressure on the page.

There are panels in the show shaped like cartoon clouds, starbursts and triangles. There are smaller scale, rectangular works that play out clever spatial games with their geometric forms, in a way that put me in mind of Tomma Abts – but in the knowledge that Coren is coming at this from an entirely different direction. His Instagram feed includes a stack of books, art monographs that include Matisse Cutouts, Hilma af Klint, Frank Stella and Mark Leckey. Those are some useful signposts to his psychogeography.

Rhys Coren has been getting noticed for a number of years: Paul Pieroni showed him at SPACE in 2013, in 2014 he had work at the Jerwood Space, and more recently Artsy has included him in their list of artists to watch in 2017. Seventeen Gallery will present a solo stand of his work at Frieze New York in May; the current show was pretty much sold out before it opened.

There is something going on here, people. Better take a look.