

## Shipsides and Beggs Projects - L'Atelier, Collectif R

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## Shipsides and Beggs Projects

Collectif R, L'Atelier, Nantes. France

### Nottanum

This show began with an invitation to show as part of a 10th year celebration of the Collectif R project in Nantes.

We began with a basic premise to take existing works such as the wooden bombs and bones, (which began through an initiation between Collectif R and Neal for a work called *How The West Was Won*, 2011) and develop new works from there for an installation and performance in the large atrium space of the gallery.

We had already been working on ideas around mixing popular and folk songs into soundscapes (many of which originate from topographical data around borders, boundaries, mountains and summits) and combining these with drawings and imagery from popular culture, current affairs and mythology – much of it connecting with ideas around political, spiritual and physical partitions, fences and the metaphor of the 'wire'. Much of the material draws from previous works, for example, the idea of a summit cross and a weaponised summit connects with the work *YUPA STAR*, 2012 which draws upon a mountaineering trip to an WW1 exploded summit in the Italian Dolomites – where now on the blasted summit plateau stands a cross.

The summit cross, of course, also echoes the romantic summit cross paintings of Casper Friedrich and others. The cross has been substituted by a barbed wire carved wooden stake topped with the globe. The barbed-wire and banjo links to other works (e.g. *Bivacco*, 2011) where a collision is made between the idea of fences or barriers and the principle of stringed popular music. Here the wire acts as both an agent of emancipation and an agent of oppression. Set into the base of the mound are a set of six playable handmade drums, making the whole sculpture a percussive soundwork.

A crankie (an early device of moving image storytelling) is also set into the base of the summit arsenal. It features a hand drawn narrative of threat, strife, crisis, werewolves, zombies and drone strikes. It is cartoon-like and playful but also dark and ridiculous – a child's fantasy of life, death and destruction. A video constructed from the crankie and re-edited with kaleidoscopic footage of the crankie re-tells the story with special effects on a small screen in the door in the back of the mound of bombs and bones. The whole work, *Mass of The World*, has a strange voodoo-ness to it.

Another aspect that we introduced was the device of the wolf. A discovery of the existence of 'wolf catching gardens' fuelled this direction. After the Hundred Year War the hinterlands became wilder and the wolf population grew so that

townspeople built gardens to protect from the wolves. The fences of these gardens were designed to allow wolves in and crucially also to prevent them leaving – so that the wolf could be easily killed by arrow and thereby diminishing the wolf threat. Lumiere de Loup is essentially a playful mobile which balances images of childlike drawings of wolves projected onto screens balanced on the tip of an arrow-point on the tip of a wooden bomb. The screen gently rotates, dips and rises as the branch moves on the tip of the arrow. The wolf here is at least double coded; On one hand, as a wild creature, a natural force that brings great biodiversity, a creature of awe and beauty – then on the other hand an anthropomorphizing of fear, a metaphor for fascism and a construction of threat or evil. The device of the light projecting an image onto screen locates the screen and images as key to constructing an enemy, a threat or an 'other' separated from ourselves.

The third aspect of the installation is a sculptural sound work based on using a tractor tyre inner-tube as the lungs or bellows for two melodicas (wind operated reed organs). The melodicas only operate when the keys are played – so that when played they release the loss of air from the inflated tube. The origin of this idea came from the idea of precarious floatation devices, made notorious in the tragic occurrences of Mediterranean sea migrations where people fleeing war and economic deprivation take incredible risks to enter Europe. The work imagines the songs of freedom such floatation devices might offer – but also countenances the tragic potential of the tune of life's last breath.

A pedestal record player artwork Kill Kill For Peace (2011) carved from a tree trunk – featuring the lyrics of the 1966 song, Kill for Peace by the Fugs - resonates with much contemporary geopolitical rhetoric and stands with and connects with the musical counter-culture of political protest and commentary of the 1960's.

A final element of the show was a performance which wove together a topographical elevation soundscape work based on the descent from Mont Blanc (Europe's highest summit) with the popular songs; Dylan's Masters of War, Black Sabbath's War Pigs and the tradition folk song Nottamun Town (the song which Dylan's Masters of War is based on). Nottamun Town relates to festival periods where social power, norms and impunities are upturned – such as the Feast of Fools festivals and Mummings Plays. In this there is a kind of playful carnivalesque sense to much of the work in this installation – we were keen to understand and work with quite dark and difficult ideas from the perspective and potential of allowing our children to encounter it.

The work overall offers lots of rich readings or encounters. We prefer the idea of 'encounters' to 'readings' – as the work is very actual, it is present and made of things with 'thingyness'. There was no clean fixed idea from the start so hopefully it has allowed a very rich and complex set of things and encounters to happen. Playful but dark.



**Mass of the world, 2017**

Carved painted wooden bombs, carved painted wooden bones, wooden drums with plastic skins, timber, carved wooden post.

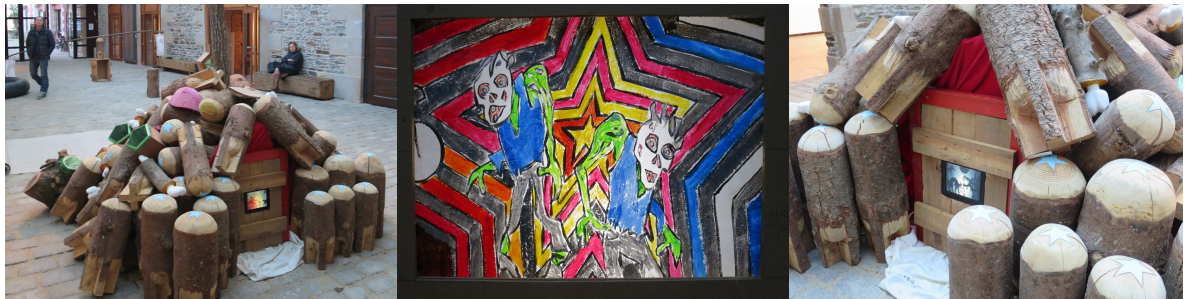


**Lumiere de Loup, 2017**

Carved painted wooden bomb, wooden crate, tree branch, wooden twig frames with geotex, LED torches, arrow and wolf stencils.



Nottanum –pata-pataphysical edit, 2017  
Wooden crankie box, paper roll with acrylic paint.



03:18 |



<https://vimeo.com/358286764>

Nottanum – **pata**-perceptual edit , 2017  
HD video with animation and crankie footage.  
3.18min

The original crankie (an early device of moving image storytelling), included within the sculptural installation, features a hand drawn narrative of threat, strife, crisis, werewolves, zombies and drone strikes. It is cartoon-like and playful but also dark and ridiculous – a child’s fantasy of life, death and destruction. This pataphysical edit is constructed from the crankie version and re-edited with kaleidoscopic footage of the crankie itself and re-tells the story with special effects and a sound track of War Pigs performed live at the opening of the exhibition in Nantes  
HD video



Migrant Swan Song, 2017  
Inner tube, pipes, wood, melodicas, tubing and compressor.



Kill Kill For Peace, 2011  
Tree trunk and acrylic paint.