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*They Don't Like  
It Up 'Em*

13 October - 13 November

Open Wed - Sun 12:00 - 6:00 pm

Private view:

12 October 6:30 - 8:30 pm



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# Simeon Barclay

## *They Don't Like It Up 'Em*

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For his first solo exhibition in London, Leeds-based multidisciplinary artist Simeon Barclay presents *They Don't Like It Up 'Em*. Drawing on a wide range of media including sculpture, video and printmaking, Barclay has semiotically charged these materials with a range of diverse and symbolically rich references from sports journalism, Vogue magazine, Afro-Caribbean dance, and British working class history. While subjectivity, personal memory, gender and cultural history are the broad brush conceptual territories covered, it is through Barclay's compelling approach to cultural archeology that a novel investigation of these categories takes place. *They Don't Like It Up 'Em* creates a seductively legible image space, in which cultural signifiers clash and cohere to produce novel associative meanings.

### **Where did the show title *They Don't Like It Up 'Em* come from?**

The term was most probably co-opted from Lance Corporal Jones, a character in the long running BBC comedy *Dads Army*. I first came across the term in the context of playing amateur football where it manifested as a way to gain advantage, an attempt to galvanise the moral of your team by capitalising on the fear and anxiety of your opponents... bully boy tactics really, a crude way to ask questions, a kind of speculative way to test and form a conclusion. I suppose that the various characters that inhabit the exhibition fall either side of this assertion.

### **And what about your use of Andy Capp?**

Andy Capp, a play on handicap is a character created by the cartoonist Reg Smythe. Capp acts as a metaphorical stand in for the types of character I grew up around; the ones that took great pleasure in pissing on your dreams. Capp might well have been the future once, a fact that I imagine haunts him creating the type of fear and bitterness that breeds ignorance. Capp's nose is put out of joint by the working class kids who reject nostalgia and crave the new, as strident modernist they re-imagine themselves both sonically and aesthetically for the future. Capp acts simultaneously as the catalyst for your own ambitions and the father you must slain.

### **Various photographic representations of male peacockery crop up quite frequently in your work, but there always seems to be a fragility lurking behind the slick surfaces and constructed images.**

This need to escape and evolve is a tumultuous exercise in which we are all implicated, the stakes are high and the fallout can be catastrophic. I'm intrigued by this negotiation and the objects and affectations that are acquired to substantiate the performance. Julian Kaye (*American Gigolo*) is a prime example, bedecked in Armani throughout the film, Kaye is fulfilled by the transformative promise of luxury consumer items, only to be undone by the same facade in the end.

Liverpool FC, the team I supported as youngster, also fell victim to the hazards of peacockery in the 1996 FA Cup final. They were the so called 'spice boys' bedecked in white Giorgio Armani suits, it was a grand statement that demanded a win, they lost, and became the butt of ridicule, soundly beaten by their deadly rivals Manchester United.

In the aftermath of that defeat, the white suits, for their critics, represented a champagne-Charlie cockiness, a flourish without substance. They fall short not only of their own untapped potential but of the mythological aura they attempt to project.

**What's seductive about your work is that it stands as the formalised outcome of what feels to be a really considered process of cultural archaeology. I'm always struck by the way you exhume images, ideas and social practices that are so rich with meaning and association, but usually these meanings and associations have been forgotten, suppressed, or maybe emptied. Diana for instance...**

I think we are at a really interesting point where all this stuff is up for grabs. The realisation that I could take ownership and expand the lexicon of disparate sources that informed my world view has been really liberating. Diana, in a way we take for granted now was ahead of the curve in understanding the power of the image. Spurned by the House of Windsor, Diana used the language of fashion to rewrite herself becoming the master tactician of a highly orchestrated performance. So yes there is all that psychological upheaval, but also a symbolic awareness that is harnessed as a means to enact a recovery.

**And finally, what are the smaller images on the surfaces that have that beautiful, deep blackness...and is that the actress Maxine Peake on the other wall as well?**

I guess all these characters, objects and gestures have on some level been plausible avatars for my own understanding of the world, each conveying multiple experiences for inhabiting a particular space, aesthetic, emotion, or assertion. The images on black are of two birds caught up in the 2010 Gulf oil spill. Their plight has seen the freedom to express themselves curtailed. This could be seen as a metaphor for a trauma both internalised and exacerbated by perceptions. Although a diptych the panels are separated, they articulate an experience that is shared, but is by no means homogenised.

I'm also interested in the sort of gender ambiguity that would have caught Andy Capp off guard. This is alluded to via the dandyism of Richard Gere, the hybrid peacockery of the dancers and the assumed foppiness of the footballers' attire. Fluidity is further encapsulated by the portrayal of Hamlet by the actress Maxine Peake. Peake's casting and performance brings into focus the struggle and limited definitions of masculinity that haunt Hamlet throughout the play.

List of works clockwise from entrance (all works 2016)

1 **Handicap**, multi colour neon, black acrylic,

2 **The Physical Weight**, Aluminium, black acrylic, vinyl adhesive

3 **Winner Takes All**, Aluminium, blue acrylic, vinyl adhesive

4 **The smell isn't righteous**, Aluminium, green acrylic, vinyl adhesive

5 **With the thrust of their frames they cut new forms**, Aluminium, blue acrylic mirror, vinyl adhesive

6 **Untitled**, 203 blue filter

7 **Playlist**, Assorted audio loops

Videos

**American Gigolo** (1980) Director: Paul Schrader Paramount Pictures

**British Hustle** (1978) Director: Curtis Clark Pennyfilm LTD Filmed in "Clouds" nightclub, Brixton, UK

Photography by Mark Blower, courtesy of Cubitt Artists.