

# Rob Hunter & John Loudon

## It's Not You - It's Us

[Medusa Complex] (Corridor of Doom)

INTERVIEWED BY DCA

**Can you describe where the idea came from for your work for DCA?**

During the production of our previous work *Disco Beards* (2008), we discussed the potential for making silhouetted imagery in positive relief. *Disco Beards* was a group of low relief portraits that used political male historical figures who had facial hair as its basis through which we explored the properties of line, shape and colour. Their hair was illustrated in negative silhouette created by abstract shapes. We wanted to take the frames away and look at depicting a person, again using layers of shape and colour in a more kit-like form. Random shapes were drawn in this process but quickly these became fixed, very particular shapes. A formalism out of abstraction in one sense. With *It's Not You* the shapes were prescriptive already and the abstraction came through pulling these recognisable shapes together into larger amorphous forms.

**Can you say more about the concourse as a space?**

The DCA is a zonal building, it exists within a zone of Dundee but as soon as you step through its sliding door you are exposed to its own areas; the shop, box office, admin offices, bar, restaurant, galleries, outdoor area and so on. The corridor/ stairs clearly act as a natural thoroughfare, indeed people use them as a way of merely passing through the building to get to the station for example. Manufacturing the title as physical signs reinforces the zone that we are attempting to establish.

Something does happen the moment you step into the gallery for sure. You could carry a work, say, in your hand from the Nethergate entrance, along the upper corridor and take it into gallery 1 and discuss the contextual differences represented by this journey, but the object really needs to be nailed down physically in order to reinforce the function of the space it occupies. It would be nice to have slipped into DCA under the cover of darkness, install the piece and in the morning the work would have just appeared. But that is a fantasy (albeit a do-able one). The reality is that the work is grafted onto the building over a period of time. In some ways it is the product of the building itself, in so far as the work has been manufactured on site in the basement workshop (bowels).

**Can you say more about the integration of autobiography in the work?**

We think when the heads are up there will be an opportunity to experience the people in and around the building as part of the work - or certainly an echo of it. Clusters of people hanging outside having a fag, some sitting in the bar others at reception and those viewing the work (we hope!) There are two versions of this installation in that there is the experience had by those who are actually 'in the work' and those who come to it cold. Taking the title as a starting point, maybe the work splits at this point. Often a title can act as a final coat of varnish through which it remains visible but is fixed. The title reinforces the 'us' in terms of our collaborative partnership as well as the grouping of heads and as the mandate between viewer and work.

On one level we know each of the personnel or heads but we are also recognising them on a broader level of a species. There is, we're sure, a whole matrix of relationships that exist between the individuals included in the 100 but we're not trying to dramatise this. Some may be emotional, some professional, social and so on. We're not attempting in any way to address that. We're just repeating the old adage that we are all different (in terms of our recognisable features/shape) and simultaneously all the same (all bound by our own shape). Putting ourselves (our own figures) outside the corridor is important. We were a fixed point through which the work came about but only that.

### **The artist John Baldessari is a stated influence. Could you describe the elements from his practice that you find significant?**

John Baldessari's influence is tricky to pin down. We were always aware of him as an interesting figure, ever since our time at art school. Like many of the artists we like we knew about him through the magazines in our college library. We spent a lot of time getting to know other artists this way, we were always pretty excited when the latest issue of Art In America or Parkett arrived. In some ways we got to know the artists in these pages better than we did our fellow students down the corridor. In many ways, it was our shared taste in work that brought about our earliest collaboration. We both liked the things Baldessari did when he visited a school in California and played with social behaviour. Like getting the kids to write lines all over the classroom walls insisting that they would never make any boring art ever again. Brilliant. There seems to be a deliberate contradiction that he instils into a lot of his work which seems completely in accordance with the creative process. His work is about the games of seeing and looking and our work, on some level, has become more and more like that. There's a graphic language that comes out of that. With the current piece it would seem strange not to acknowledge some of his more signature works like the ones with the eyes covered up using blocks of colour. The show he did in the Serpentine a few years back featured paintings with photo montage. He said that the work was neither painting nor photography so in that sense *It's Not You...* isn't painting or sculpture either. An influence can be there without you always being conscious of it, almost like you were treading the same bit of ground but you just deviated from it slightly.

### **How did you begin your collaboration?**

As early as our 2nd year at Edinburgh College of Art, we tried our hand at makeshift performances and interventions together. During an exchange visit to Montpellier, France we galvanized our working relationship. This culminated in our degree show in 1994, which was a collaborative performance work which consisted of a comprehensive installation and week long performance. Since this time we have come together through various projects whilst still continuing to work on separate bodies of work. *It's Not You – It's Us* opens very nearly 15 years to the day from our degree show, which seems significant as this is the largest work we have done to date.

# DCA10

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