

## Exhibition Guide

**Simon Patterson *High Noon***  
**8 June – 17 July 2005**

Born in 1967, British artist Simon Patterson quickly gained an international reputation since taking part in the ground-breaking *Freeze* exhibition in 1988. *High Noon* is his most comprehensive exhibition to date, comprising a wide range of media including painting, wall drawing, installation, sound, sculpture and film.

Patterson takes conventional systems of classification, maps and diagrams, and manipulates them to create a range of alternative meanings, with language often playing a crucial role. In so doing, he makes the 'familiar' strange, encouraging us to look at things from different points of view. This is demonstrated in his most famous work, *The Great Bear*, (1992), where a seemingly random logic is applied to the iconic London Underground map. Here the artist has substituted names of stations with those of famous people and places. For example, the Marx brothers rub shoulders with Bette Davis and Michael Caine on what was once the Northern Line, which Patterson now devotes to famous actors, while the Jubilee Line pays homage to footballers past and present. This renaming reveals a complex range of associations, some obvious - such as the centre of London's theatre-land, Leicester Square, now titled Laurence Olivier and the triangular interconnection of lines at Paddington replaced by Pythagoras. Other connections are more puzzling, such as Euston Square being renamed Karl Marx. Could this be that he is being invited to join the Marx Brothers' comic team due to his proximity to Euston Station, now called Zeppo?

In the ongoing series, *Name Paintings*, the viewer is invited to visualise the image of a celebrity by simply reading their name, which Patterson has silk screened onto a primed canvas. The typeface is plain, in a minimalist gesture that gives the viewer's imagination as much space as possible for conjuring up associated thoughts and images. His first name paintings, *Richard Burton/Elizabeth Taylor*, (1987), are exhibited here and evoke memories of the Hollywood couple, both on and off screen. This work is particularly poignant in the light of Burton and Taylor's turbulent relationship, as the paintings make up a diptych, where the two parts are at once together and separate.

In 1996, Patterson was nominated for the Turner Prize which included his installation of *Untitled (Sails)*, (1996), at Tate Britain. A sculptural piece, three full-scale yachting sails are placed alongside each other, marked with the names Laurence Sterne, Currer Bell and Raymond Chandler. This work plays upon the viewer's knowledge of two diverse subjects – sailing and literature. The names are those of famous authors – Sterne wrote ground-breaking novels, Bell was the pseudonym of Charlotte Brontë and Chandler wrote crime fiction. However, each name has an additional association related to sailing and shipping – the stern is the rear of the boat, the bell is used as a traditional nautical signal and a ship's chandler provides necessary supplies. The numbers become less obscure through the realisation that they relate to the authors' birth and death dates. The information on the sails is presented as formal yacht identification markings – highlighting Patterson's obsession with systems. The work evokes ideas of escape and travel, as the artist invites the viewer on a voyage into a fictional world created by the three writers.

Patterson has made a new commission for the exhibition. *Time Piece*, (2005), is a beautifully shot 35mm film of two fob watches swinging in and out of synchronisation, against the stereo soundtrack of male and female breathing, which becomes increasingly urgent through some form of physical exertion. The result is extremely erotic, surprisingly, given the subject matter. Its editing corresponds to the climactic shoot-outs of the film *High Noon*, which gives the exhibition its title.

A sexual dimension is evident in another of Patterson's films, *Escape Routine*, (2002). It shows flight attendants demonstrating the familiar in-flight safety procedures using seat belts and breathing apparatus. This is combined with images of people escaping from handcuffs, chains and strait-jackets, the type of classic tricks performed by escapologist Harry Houdini, while a smooth voiceover reads extracts from his writings on magic. This silky voice and the images of bondage create an erotic overtone. By choosing a routine familiar to many, but presenting it with a twist, Patterson translates its practical and comforting message into a sadomasochistic fantasy. Interestingly, Patterson has created a double ending for the final film sequence – an English and a Japanese version. This makes reference to the theme of duality or doubling as a strategy, for example, male and female, restraint and escape. It also relates to international travel and our experience of different cultures and languages.

The artist's sound piece, *Color Match*, (1997), is being broadcast into Oozells Square outside Ikon. In this work, Patterson makes connections between sport and colour using the familiar voice of BBC broadcaster Tim Gudgin. Instead of hearing football results, we hear the names of all the teams that have ever played in the English Football League, in alphabetical order. These are combined with the numbers of

individual Pantone® colours - some matched to specific football strips while others have no obvious link. The Pantone® system is the international colour standard used by printers and designers. Patterson has described it as 'creating a continuous visual spectrum by aural means alone'. This piece demonstrates the artist's interest in 'synaesthesia', a condition which results in a mixing of senses, causing people to experience symptoms such as 'coloured' hearing or 'auditory' smells.

Simon Patterson lives and works in London.

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