

# Simon Patterson

## High Noon

**Exhibition** 26 February – 1 May 2005

Best known for his reworking of the London Underground map, *The Great Bear*, 1992, Simon Patterson makes art which depends on the playful subversion of familiar classification systems for much of its effect. By fusing recognisable visual forms with incongruous conceptual associations, the artist draws unexpected and extraordinary connections between people, facts and ideas. That these achieve their own kind of legitimacy shakes our faith in common logic, opening the door to a universe governed by curiosity and imagination.

Patterson's witty exploration of our continual need for classification and categorisation won him a nomination for the Tate's Turner Prize in 1996. A graduate from Goldsmiths' College, London 1986-89, he was one of the emerging Young British Artists who participated in Damien Hirst's now famous *Freeze* exhibition in London in 1988.

Simon Patterson's work often involves the collision of two or more established systems. This tends to result in patterns of incongruous names and subtle word associations. His Name Paintings are amongst his earliest works. In them, the names of famous people – film stars, political leaders, celebrities past and present – are written out in American Typewriter font. The paintings are mostly constructed in the same rectangular portrait format with black letters on a dead-white, matt background. While the format invokes the formal aspects of portraiture, the names the artist chooses are the kind of people who are often the subject of official portraiture. Patterson's first name painting, *Richard Burton/Elizabeth Taylor* of 1987, depicts the couple known both for their portrayal of Antony and Cleopatra, and for their tumultuous personal life.

*The Last Supper Arranged According to the Sweeper Formation (Jesus Christ in Goal)*, 1990, is a playful work, which again relies solely on names, this time to conjure a vision of the Last Supper. The work references art history and football, tacitly comparing the Renaissance artists' puzzle over how to squeeze Jesus Christ and his disciples around a table and still pose them for the artist with the football manager's eternal dilemma over the placing of his players on the field.

In *The Great Bear*, 1992, Simon Patterson replaces the names that appear on the London Underground map with those of politicians, contemporary footballers, comedians, philosophers and film stars. *The Great Bear* brings together layers of information, working as a map in that it enables the viewer to

locate themselves in relationship to other 'things', but confusing the things to which it invites us to relate – cultural icons rather than underground stations.<sup>[1]</sup>

*General Assembly*, a work originally commissioned in 1994 by Chisenhale Gallery in London, fills the upper gallery. Part typewriter, part stadium seating, it consists of one wall set up as a giant typewriter keyboard, while on the three other walls one continuous row of seating spells out the sentence well-known to all who have ever learnt to type: the quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog. There are names above several of the seat brackets. Some are real countries and some the names of lands described by Jonathan Swift in *Gulliver's Travels*. *General Assembly* takes its inspiration from a football match organised between soldiers from the UN peacekeeping forces then stationed in Bosnia, and players from the local football team. The names listed include those of Dag Hammarskjöld, Kurt Waldheim, U Thant, Javier Perez de Cuellar and Mr. Boutros-Boutros Gali, five Secretaries General of the United Nations. The real countries listed are those with permanent seats on the UN Security Council.

As Patricia Bickers has pointed out, one important aspect of the manner in which *General Assembly* generates its effect as a work of art is the way its form bears upon the 'question' of sculpture. The entire work is wall-mounted, yet its allusion to the sports arena animates the gallery floor as a site of action.

*Colour Match*, 2001, makes a link between two rigidly coded systems: Colour standards and football teams. As colours cycle past, a familiar voice calls out an oddly deranged version of the national football scores. Patterson has produced several works on this theme; the screensaver version shown here features the voice of John Cavanagh who announces BBC Scotland's Football League results, with pantone references replacing the names of the teams.<sup>[2]</sup> In the first version, *Color Match*, 1997, featuring the English Football League, the American spelling of colour is perhaps a sly reference to the so-called 'special relationship' between the USA and the UK. *Le Match des couleurs*, 2000, used HTML colours alongside a reading by Radio France's Eugène Saccomano.

Patterson has a long-standing interest in magic; 'I first became interested in Houdini as a student at Goldsmiths' College and

since then he has become something of an alter ego for me.' *Escape Routine*, 2002, reflects the artist's admiration for Harry Houdini, and features Shahid Malik, arguably the world's greatest living escapologist. Patterson's first video work *Escape Routine* was commissioned by Locus+ and shown as part of the 2002 Sydney Biennale. The film focuses on the familiar in-flight safety demonstration enacted by two female and two male flight attendants who appear to demonstrate the usual safety routine, designed to lull airline passengers into a false sense of security. There's the soothing voice-over, the pressed uniforms, the badly drawn diagrams. The familiar paraphernalia of oxygen masks, lifejackets, escape routes etc, is juxtaposed with magic routines involving escapes from handcuffs, chains, straightjackets and a reading from Houdini's thoughts on magic.

Two new works have been commissioned for this exhibition. *Ur*, 2005, is graphic diagram of the layout of the ancient city of *Ur* in Southern Iraq, established around 2100 B.C. as the capital of the Mesopotamian Civilization. The people of this civilization built a wonderful city, which was centred on a temple called a ziggurat that towered above all other buildings. In a familiar layering of systems of information, Patterson overlays the plan of the city with a diagram of electrical circuitry.

*Time Piece*, 2005, shot on 35mm film, shows two beautifully-crafted fob watches moving in and out of phase, visually and aurally. The watches swing from left to right, male and female, gold and silver. The sound source with its subtle erotic undertones is the breath of two actors. In keeping with Patterson's interest in classic films, the rhythm of the film is inspired by Fred Zinnemann's classic 1952 Western *High Noon*, with the edits of each of the three cycles taken from different sections of the film's climactic shoot out.

This exhibition at The Fruitmarket Gallery forms part one half of a temporally and spatially separated whole. A complementary and overlapping exhibition of work by Simon Patterson will be shown at Ikon Gallery Birmingham from 8 June to 17 July 2005.

#### Notes

1. The London Underground Map as we know it today was developed by Harry Beck in the 1933. Beck was an electrical draughtsman, and based his map on circuit diagrams. The map is a topological diagram of the 275 stations and 400 kilometres of tracks, which make up the London Underground. It uses coloured lines, either horizontal, vertical or at angles of 45 degrees, together with circles and coloured 'ticks' for stations. The tube lines vary in colour - relating to the different companies, which in the past ran the different lines.

2. Pantone, Inc. is the world-renowned authority on colour and provider of colour systems and leading technology for the selection and accurate communication of colour.

### Simon Patterson Limited Edition Prints

**Simon Patterson,  
High Noon and Manned Flight, £150** framed  
Two limited-edition photographs.

One is a film still from his new work *High Noon*, the other documents the artist's man-lifting kite marooned in a tree in Edinburgh's Princes Street Gardens



#### Publication

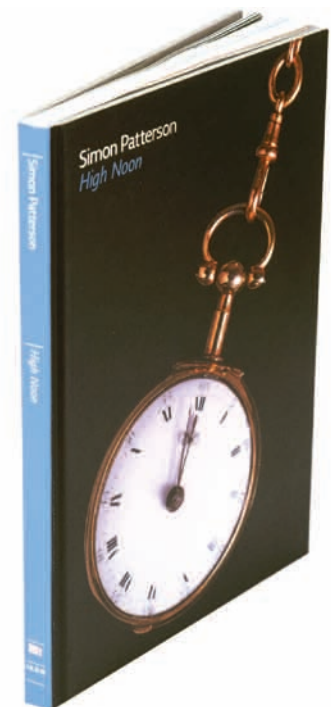
**Simon Patterson, High Noon, £15.00**

*Writers: Michael Archer, Patricia Bickers, Fiona Bradley,  
Simon Patterson*

Published in collaboration with Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, this lavishly illustrated, hardback book offers a up to date overview of patterson's work.

#### Also available

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# Talks and Events

## Artist's Talk, Simon Patterson in conversation

Sunday 27 February, 2pm. Free. Booking advised.

Jonathan Watkins, Director of Ikon Gallery in discussion with artist Simon Patterson.

## Curator's Talk (BSL signed)

Thursday 24 March, 6.30pm. Free. Booking advised.

Judith Schwarzbart, Curator at The Fruitmarket Gallery, discusses the work in Simon Patterson's exhibition. This talk will be simultaneously translated by a British Sign Language interpreter.

## Linguists Talk

Thursday 14 April, 6.30pm. Free. Booking advised.

Dr John Corbett, Senior Lecturer, Department of English Language, University of Glasgow will discuss the use of language and the references to literature in Patterson's work.

## Adult's Printmaking Workshop

Saturday 23 April, 11am–5pm.

Tickets £30 / £20 concession. Booking essential.

Venue: Edinburgh Printmakers Workshop, 23 Union St.,

Taking inspiration from Simon Patterson's use of typography, Edinburgh Printmakers Workshop will deliver a practical printmaking session exploring language and typography.

## Family Workshop

Saturday 16 April, 2–4pm. Tickets £4 per child.

Artist Tony Nolan will deliver a fun kite-making workshop inspired by Simon Patterson's large man-lifting kite, *Manned Flight*. Suitable for 3–6 year olds and one parent/guardian.

## Opt in For Art

### Free Gallery Tours for School and Youth Groups

As part of *Opt in For Art*, The Fruitmarket Gallery's new two-year programme of work with children and young people, the Gallery offers visits for schools and youth organisations. Visits include free transport, a guided tour of the exhibition and a resource pack containing: a exhibition documentary DVD, a book on the artist and a workbook for each participant.

### Opt in For Art Tours

*Opt in for Art* offers free tours for Youth or School Groups, including transport, an exhibition tour and a resource pack.

For further information contact:

Johnny Gailey, Opt in For Art Co-ordinator

**P** 0131 226 8186 **E** [optinforart@fruitmarket.co.uk](mailto:optinforart@fruitmarket.co.uk)

## Booking

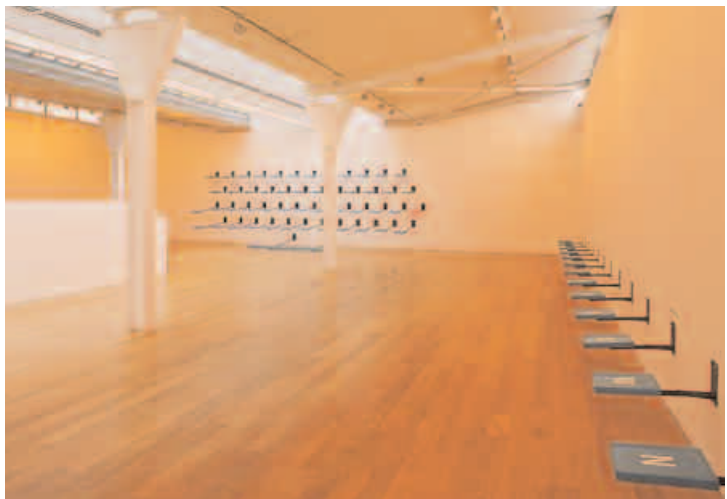
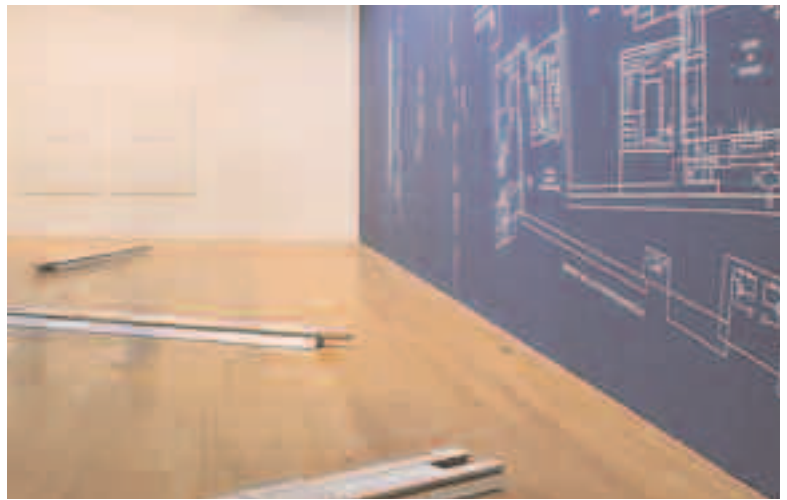
To book for all talks and events contact the bookshop

**P** 0131 226 8181 **E** [bookshop@fruitmarket.co.uk](mailto:bookshop@fruitmarket.co.uk)

The Gallery welcomes group bookings from colleges, universities and community groups. These must be booked two weeks in advance of your visit.

## Location

Centrally situated behind Edinburgh Waverley Rail Station, close to major bus routes on the Royal Mile, North Bridge, Waverley Bridge and Princes Street.



Simon Patterson, Landskip, Calton Hill Edinburgh  
Simon Patterson, Installation view