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[Interview with Matthew Newton](#)

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Interview with Matthew Newton

I always think that as an artist one of the biggest compliments you can get is when another artist looks at your work and says, 'damn I wish I'd done that first'. For me this usually occurs with the most simple ideas, something seemingly gestural or off-hand. This phrase is exactly what came to mind when I saw Matthew Newton's 'Similar Airplanes'.



IS: You seem fascinated with creating order amongst otherwise unrelated material. What is it that interests you about the in the cataloguing and grouping of this found material?

MN: Yes, that is certainly one arm of my practice. Sometimes it is creating order, but a lot of the time it is about finding or revealing a personal organization for myself, figuring out why I respond to certain things and not others. A lot of artists deal with cataloguing and grouping specifically but for me that happens more as a byproduct. I think mine is more of an accumulation, a pile of data, signposts from a curious meandering.

IS: We have an abundance of information and imagery available to us, and as your work demonstrates, it often seems that everything is a bit like something else. Do you think it is possible to create a truly original image?

MN: I think of images as their own realities, or evidence of realities. If I create an image, it's evidence that I exist at a certain point in time and circumstance and images that I find are evidence that someone else exists in other circumstances. So, I try to have as non-hierarchical relationship between those two types of images as possible as a way of simultaneously validating my existence and others'.



IS: Do you think the more information we receive, the more we feel the need to take ownership of it and create order within it?

MN: Unfortunately, creating order means limiting the possibility of information but also makes it functional, turns it into knowledge. I don't believe we as humans ever received less information than we do now, it's just that it comes to us in ever-increasingly organized ways. For example, Google's written

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goal is "to organize the world's information." To simply open one's eyes is to be bombarded with more information than we can possibly list out. But it seems that more and more we aren't asked to look, just to process pre-organized information. I think that looking/observing is a much more complex and personal activity than organization allows. I both start with observation and try to end at a place where observation is allowed to roam unfettered. Of course, I go through cycles of organization and grouping to get there.

IS: In pointing out the similarities, you also bring attention to the differences, therefore pointing out that although never completely original, these images can never be honestly replicated. Would you agree with this?

MN: You're right, in my work when two similar or same things are in proximity they are on a hyperbolic curve, always approaching but never merging.

The thing I love about static images and static objects is that they are always on the move. Not only can an image not be replicated, the first image itself can never be experienced the same way twice. It's like listening to a great song. You can enjoy it dozens and dozens of times but you'll never listen to it for the first time again and each time it's repeated, your idea of what the song sounds like shifts a little. Or like the famous Heraclitus quote: "you cannot step into the same river twice."



IS: What is the role of your blog/internet presence within your art practice?

MN: When I first opened up my online presence a few years ago with a website, blog, and the various social networking tools, the goal was dissemination, to put my art out into the world. But today those electronic places become more and more integrated with my working process and not only my disseminating process. Now I refer to my blog as an electronic notebook or even sketchbook; a place for me to place interesting thoughts or images that may be half-baked or just simple curiosities. I've tried my best to keep a regular sketchbook but I keep gravitating back to pecking notes into my iPhone and snapping images as I roam the city. I spend a lot of time on the subway taking notes and working through ideas on my phone. A lot of that stuff ends up on my blog much like it might have ended up in a moleskin journal in previous generations. Though sometimes I have the impulse to unplug it all and revert.

IS: What blogs do you visit regularly? Which would you recommend?

MN: I get RSS feeds on a lot of art sites to keep up with what's showing and being talked about. Some of those are:

e-flux

nytimes.com art

artforum.com

BOMBlog

c-monster.net

I really like the blogs of these two poets:

Felix Fardo, <http://misterharkey.blogspot.com/>

Chris Vitiello, http://the_delay.blogspot.com/

and my friend Elizabeth:

<http://elizabethubergen.blogspot.com>



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