



Shana Moulton  
*Swisspering Pines* 2013  
video

Lennon, too, refreshes familiar conceptual territories (in her case torrential image production, the invasive forces of consumerism, and distracted and pliant subjects) with pointedly inelegant visuality. She, like Blalock, deliberately 'stutters': *Dark Matter*, 2013, a short frieze of cut-out images of little Greco-Roman headless statues, about to be goosed by real vibrators and tinted by a frontage of yellow perspex, overflows with coercive suggestiveness but runs a deficit of actual connective sense. Or she refuses images entirely, as in *The Pattern*, 2013, a text-filled poster boasting of its own ability to drastically colour perception. Heather Phillipson's digital video, *A is to D what E is to H*, 2011, meanwhile, treats content as something to be plugged into the pre-existing format of film. Complete with up-to-date caffeinated editing and interjections of blurring noise on the one hand and, in its found imagery and generative language games, debts to John Smith's early structuralist films on the other, it spins a travelogue that begins with a homonymic confusion of 'French kissing' and 'French cuisine' and becomes an energetically inconclusive inquiry into both of them.

By way of fortuitous contrast, two of the more striking recent shows in London hew to the most lo-fi of materials – requiring, resultantly, the most inventive ways of renovating and recombining them. The veteran US artist **B Wurtz**, receiving – ridiculously – his first London solo show, is a poet of discards and roadside ephemera comparable to David Hammons: his signature item is the polythene bag. A coloured one, mind, since the initial distraction of Wurtz's

fine combinatory manners distracts from the fact that he is also a subtle colourist of the commonplace: *Untitled*, 1981, an array of used vinyl records on the ends of poles – like sentinels, like spinning plates – is also a system of delicately coloured circles, themselves nested with pointed content that might be read through Wurtz's limitless trash-picking practice (eg one record is a recording of *Don Quixote*). In making what was apparently a selection of personal favourites, though, Kate MacGarry has seemingly tacked towards busier works. My favourite ended up being the relatively minimal *Handbag*, 1970, pretty much nothing more than a whitish carrier bag scrunched into the titular shape: a wry elevation of the innocuous that predicts the next 43 years of work.

And at the Freud Museum, we arrive at simultaneously the lowest and highest use of tools in town. **Damián Ortega**, known primarily for exhibiting a car exploded out into its constituent parts and suspended on wires, tends to make sculptures pitched precariously between falling together and falling apart, as a prefatory piece here involving a torch reminds us. (As in 'dear viewer, this is the "constituent-parts-on-wires guy"'.) Of late, though, he has been exploring another kind of precarity, in the Gashaka region of Nigeria, home of the rarest subspecies of chimpanzee, who 'seem to have developed a culture of their own', according to the press materials. Nevertheless, how this relates to the cluster of sculptures at chez Freud is not entirely clear.

What Ortega appears to be doing, primarily, is rewinding – presumably via the ape mind and their tool-making culture – to a point where objects might be used to direct a primitive, or other, understanding, and thereby making an implicit parallel between a fictional anthropology and psychotherapy. A pair of metal models of football players, one upright and one inverted, on either side of a spyglass, is entitled *How to See*, 2013, as if explaining retinal inversions to an unversed audience; a tangle of coloured wires that is a telephone switchboard model entombed in a perspex case is titled *How to Think*, 2013, while a boxful of eggs splashed with caramel-coloured paint, vaguely recalling Marcel Broodthaers, is entitled *Gestural Object of Cult*, 2013. Taking throwaways and random clutter and making them emblematic of an entire swathe of civilisation (or even, as with Wurtz, making them sing) is no mean feat. Making it funny as well, as Ortega does, is even harder. As digital technology becomes ever more the new normal – like photography and video in turn – and artists can less easily argue for their work simply on the basis of its position vis-à-vis the so-called digital divide, such basic criteria of transformative ingenuity will increasingly apply there too. ■

MARTIN HERBERT is a critic based in Tunbridge Wells, Kent.



**Alustretch UK Limited**  
professional artist stretcher  
bars & surfaces in aluminium

[www.alustretch.co.uk](http://www.alustretch.co.uk)

**MOTION IN FORM**

A series of film-based  
exhibitions and events  
from July - October 2013

Electro Studios Project Space  
Seaside Road  
St Leonards-on-Sea  
TN38 0AL

[motioninform.tumblr.com](http://motioninform.tumblr.com)

Oliver Bancroft  
Jenny Baines  
Zoë Brown  
Jim Hobbs  
Guy Sherwin &  
Lynn Loo  
Bea Haut  
Louise Colbourne

ESPS

Supported using public funding by  
ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND

LOTTERY FUNDED