

The following text accompanying the exhibition **Post**, mirrors Robertson's approach, consisting of borrowed images – (words which aren't mine), blatant over interpretation, fleeting thoughts, and prose, snippets arranged on a page to form a pattern that might resemble a 'text'.

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The most important question might be how to reflect in words on an artist who engages deeply with the ineffable?

Perhaps the answer is to employ the same methodology, but with different 'materials', to skirt on the edge of poetry and the conceptual just as Kate's work occupies the tenebrous threshold between ideas and images.

### **TO WRITE ALONGSIDE, NOT FOR, OR AGAINST BUT ASKEW!**

However the real question might be not what is unsayable, but instead what is unspoken, what we decide to hold inside...an often intangible 'thing' that is framed exquisitely by Robertson in the works such as *Elsewhere* and *'Better Versions #18 and #19'*.

These are Robertson's 'ghost signs' fading frescos embossed into paper by the artists' repetitive pressure with a biro, leaving surface criss-crossed with once concealed desires.

Like the blush inducing desire for the 'perfect holiday' printed across a broad sheet, that implores us to...

### EXPLORE LIFE TO THE FULL

These works are a timely reminder of advertising's obsequious ability to get inside us and align its imagery with our imaginary.

It's how <sup>1</sup>Benjamin became stuck in the arcade... it's what lead Marshall McLuhan<sup>2</sup> to exclaim loudly and often that advertising is the folk art of the 20th century!

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<sup>1</sup> Walter Benjamin a German Jewish philosopher, cultural critic and essayist. An eclectic thinker and posthumous author of *Passagenwerk* (The Arcades Project).

<sup>2</sup> Marshall McLuhan a philosopher, who's work laid the foundation for the field of media theory, most famously with his work come slogan the Medium is the Message.

But as I stare at the inverted images in *Better Versions #18 and #19* and the Zoom-like grid of *Elsewhere* I am also overcome by the uncanny feeling of looking out at the world through the lonely eyes of printed advertising teetering on the edge of obsolescence.

There is within Robertson's work a sense of embodiment of time, a sympathy for things that are drifting, and have become materially unmoored or made anachronistic by the 'new'.

This is not to pit the novel against the archaic, to grieve the loss of one technology or admonish us for embracing the new, nor is it a form of nostalgia, but rather an attempt to put the new in dialogue with the old, to drill down towards the raw psychological nub of the human experience, and the way our vision, desire and understanding are shaped by the shifting materiality and aesthetics of technology.

Something is freed up by the loosening of function, or its collapse into aesthetics, you can only start to see the workings as the wheels fall off.

This is particularly apparent in Robertson's use of image transfer, a process that 'borrows an image' rather than 'finding' or replicating it. In this 'borrowing' there is a refusal of artistic ownership, an acknowledgement of an artworks fleeting form. The image is instead a sort of byproduct of the artist's interaction with it, a palimpsest, a surface reused overwritten or altered but still bearing visible traces of its original form.

Robertson's interest in anachronistic materials and forms extends to the other works in the exhibition, *Endpoints*, *Margins*, *Broken Wavelengths* and *Post*, that variously use; newspaper cuttings, postal envelopes, old mobile phone parts, and CD's, and utilise distinctly ancient modes of production like weaving and mosaic to shape them into particular patterns and forms.

These works emerge from Robertson's studio archive, where the artist hoards objects and materials, allowing them to become patinated by time, to shed their context, use, or original meaning to in a sense reduce down to a neutral aesthetic essence. Becoming just the sky blank blue of a billboard paper for example or the peachiness of the Financial Times, or as isolated dots of cyan, magenta, yellow and black which were once registration marks used in offset printing.

Robertson's archive is without borders or hierarchies, it constantly reuses and recycles material, through which the process becomes the form and the form frames the process. This framing is particularly apparent in the dialogue between *Endpoints* and *Margins*, both of which seem to attempt to obliquely represent absence or lack.

There is a lightness of touch here, of 'things' simply becoming 'things' that are observed ... beautifully evoked by Screensaver #1, a work that waifishly and weightlessly hangs around in the mid frame, momentarily full of animated character.

In *Endpoints* Robertson uses a series of coloured dots, each one carefully extracted from a newspaper and mosaics them together to create a series of circular, oval and spiral patterns, or zeros and empty brackets ( ) black holes, full stops, and spirals that taper in to a blank and empty centre.

In *Margins* Robertson continues this leitmotif, attempting to re-construct a series of rectangular pages from paper offcuts produced through making *Endpoints*. The impossibility of reconstructing the page creates a double absence or lack, framing the process of fragmentation, the production of the offcuts, and at the same time also mindful of the empty spaces, the points where the offcuts don't or won't meet to reform a page.

There is another structural strategy at work here, exploring the possibilities of mosaic as a method of representation. Mosaic is after all a form made up of the anarchic, of recycled and reformed fragments, leftovers corralled by proximity back into an image or form somewhere between the two dimensional and three dimensional.

*Broken Wavelengths*, perhaps most directly addresses Robertson's long standing fascination with the space, psychology and materiality of the screen and our screen based lives.

Particularly the potential of objects as we know them to become obsolete and the spaces where we meet each other to be irreducibly changed.

fragments of CDs the screen and the medium which, like

By overlaying and assembling, the and broken glass, Robertson brings mosaic into a direct comparison, a

the screen in its time also created a new form of site, the idea of image architecture, domestic and civic interiors turned into scenes of nature, the sacred or the mythological. Like the screen today often externalising and projecting what was before largely only internally seen or imagined, connecting the outside to the within but also freezing, flattening and irrecoverably changing it.

Where *Broken Wavelengths* ends the titular *Post* series begins, and Robertson contends to give an aesthetic form to a zeitgeist of our lives in lockdown. **COMMUNICATION.**

With titles like *Meeting*, which replicates the now hauntingly familiar ZOOM grid and *Disparity* that hint at the discrepancy between what is offered by communication technology and the actual reality of its limits and borders.

Here Robertson shows an eye for the iconic, the way that everyday forms can simply though day to day use become a symbol. The envelope like the ZOOM grid, is a stand-in for communication as whole, one which is dissected, opened up turned inside out and reconstituted by Robertson in an effort to convey something different again and draw a line between old and new.

Robertson's works have a lived intimacy of objects that have accumulated in these strangest of times, they seem to grow organically feeding of and flow into each other and Robertson has an insightful way of allowing you see the workings, letting you into the joy of her structural twists and turns.

It's a way of working which is not afraid of failure, but rather embraces it as an important part of both the artistic process and the construction of the artwork's meaning.

All the while shifting us ever further away from romantic notions of the artist that creates something out of nothing, towards a more relatable and truthful image of the artist as someone who sees pattern and correlation, that brings things into being only through combination, accumulation, chance, borrowing and process.

Not a divine creation then but a scientific and artistic one, of 'matters' disturbing

one  
an other  
in the darkness,  
clumping anew  
and becoming  
forms.

**“ SOMETHING HAPPENS IN THE TRYING ”**

- Kate V Robertson