

Day for Night.

Sunday December 11 was pretty much like any other Sunday. The papers carried very little news apart from a war or two, a bomb here and there and seasonal lifestyle tips for the well groomed and seemingly bored but happy. By about midday I was ready to face my normal Sunday stroll and the delights of Streatham's only decent green grocers. Streatham is never going to win awards for its beauty or adventurous lay out. A town that consists of one long, faded high street of Victorian architecture, the ground floors gutted and succeeded by day-glo shop fronts – acrylic cornucopias of down-at-heel consumer desire. Now, Streatham is no Vegas, but Christmas was looming and the Council had begrudgingly entered into the spirit, stringing a rather unimpressive set of bulbs from lamppost to lamppost along the high street disappearing into the vanishing point of exotic South London suburbia. The first thing I noticed were the lights on the west side of the street blinking with mechanical synchronicity. On the east side however, the lights remained static, steadfastly refusing to indulge in such vulgar exhibitionism. I wondered which set of lights were broken. Were they both supposed to flash, or were they both supposed to stay constantly illuminated. After a time watching, the flashing lights did seem to have a certain hangdog appearance, their movement possibly caused by an erratic and dwindling power supply as opposed to design. Either way, I didn't hold out much hope that they would make it to Christmas. They looked like they knew they were beaten and were about to give up the ghost.

It was then that I noticed the sky. Or, to be precise, the light. Or the lack of it.

The sky was uniformly slate grey, totally flat, a luminosity buried deep within the sky which gave it a strange depth. It was almost like a summers day just before an electrical storm, but the seemingly endless cloud bursting with light and not rain. The day would be a day of twilight, a day, which had seemingly got there before the Christmas lights, and had already given up the ghost, retreated and was trying to hide behind the night. To tell the truth I didn't think much more about it. The days were short that time of year, and up until this point it had been a pretty dark winter anyway, so no great shakes there. But the quality of light was very odd, and as such added a shadowy, day for night shot cinematic quality to my walk through the town. With a little imagination, I turned Streatham into a scene of understated apocalyptic science fiction, and it was all the better for it. It was later around four, and already as dark as London's streetlights allow when the phone rang. 'Have you seen the news', Phil asked me rather excitedly, 'Turn on the news'. I went downstairs, turned on the television and tuned into the twenty-four hour news channel. As the images faded up on the screen I was transfixed. I watched for hours. The biggest fire Europe had seen since World War Two.

And it was beautiful.

Simon Hollington

Simon Hollington is an artist and writer based in London.

PHIL ASHCROFT
New paintings and graphic works

TOXICITY

Margaret Harvey Gallery
22 June – 29 July 2006

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Overleaf Burefield III,
acrylic on canvas,
91 x 122cm, 2006
© Phil Ashcroft

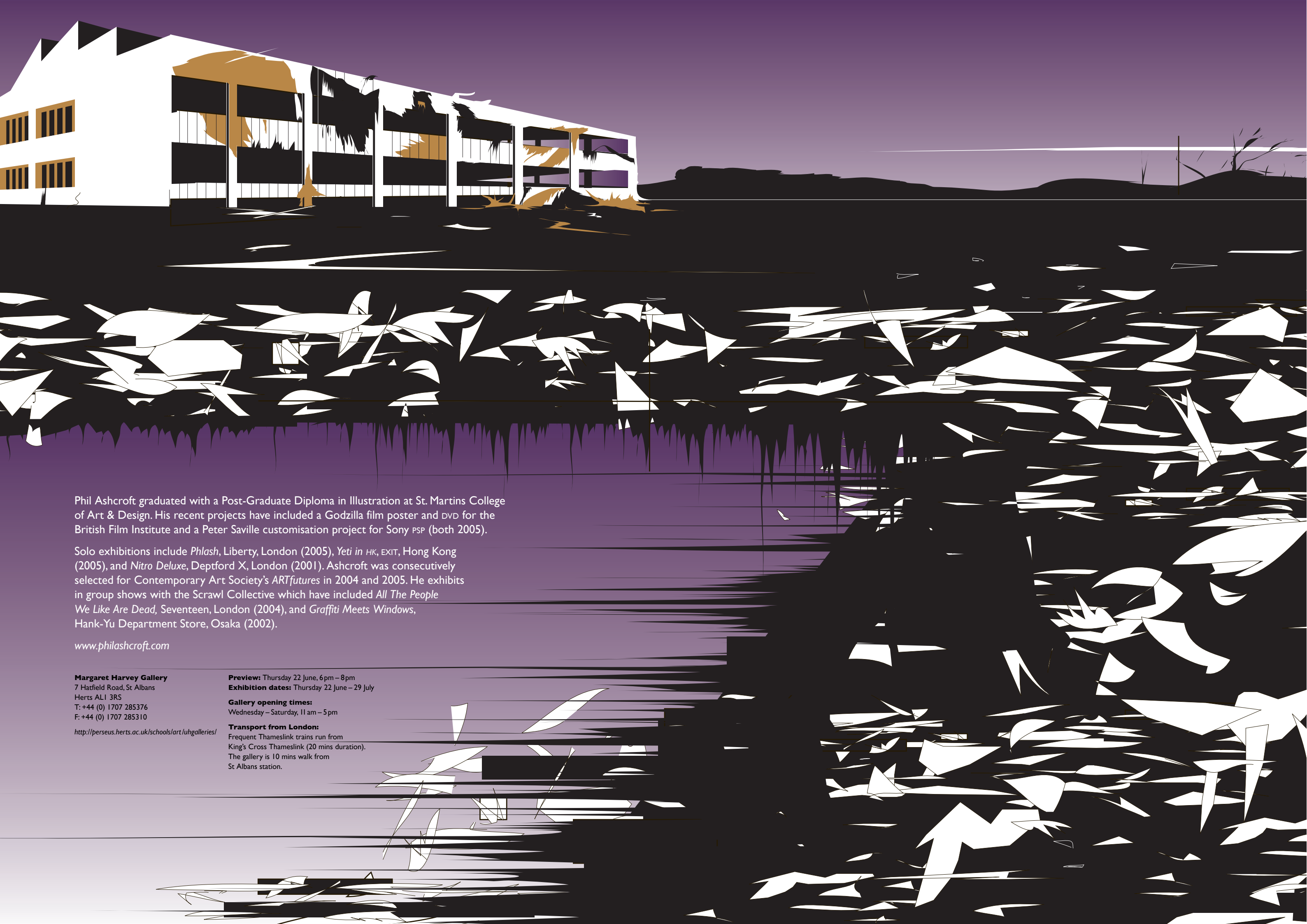
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Phil Ashcroft graduated with a Post-Graduate Diploma in Illustration at St. Martins College of Art & Design. His recent projects have included a Godzilla film poster and DVD for the British Film Institute and a Peter Saville customisation project for Sony PSP (both 2005).

Solo exhibitions include *Phlash*, Liberty, London (2005), *Yeti in HK, EXIT*, Hong Kong (2005), and *Nitro Deluxe*, Deptford X, London (2001). Ashcroft was consecutively selected for Contemporary Art Society's *ARTfutures* in 2004 and 2005. He exhibits in group shows with the Scrawl Collective which have included *All The People We Like Are Dead*, Seventeen, London (2004), and *Graffiti Meets Windows*, Hank-Yu Department Store, Osaka (2002).

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Preview: Thursday 22 June, 6pm – 8pm
Exhibition dates: Thursday 22 June – 29 July

Gallery opening times:
Wednesday – Saturday, 11 am – 5 pm

Transport from London:
Frequent Thameslink trains run from King's Cross Thameslink (20 mins duration). The gallery is 10 mins walk from St Albans station.