

*Simon Newby*

# *Titles...*

*Images by Glen Jamieson*

*Words by Mike Goddard*

*Simon Newby works with a multitude of materials and techniques, with themes ranging from formal composition to informal humour. His works often explore realms of flatness and depth, and the relations between objects and symbols. Familiar forms are encountered anew, sometimes through comical arrangements or uncanny likenesses.*

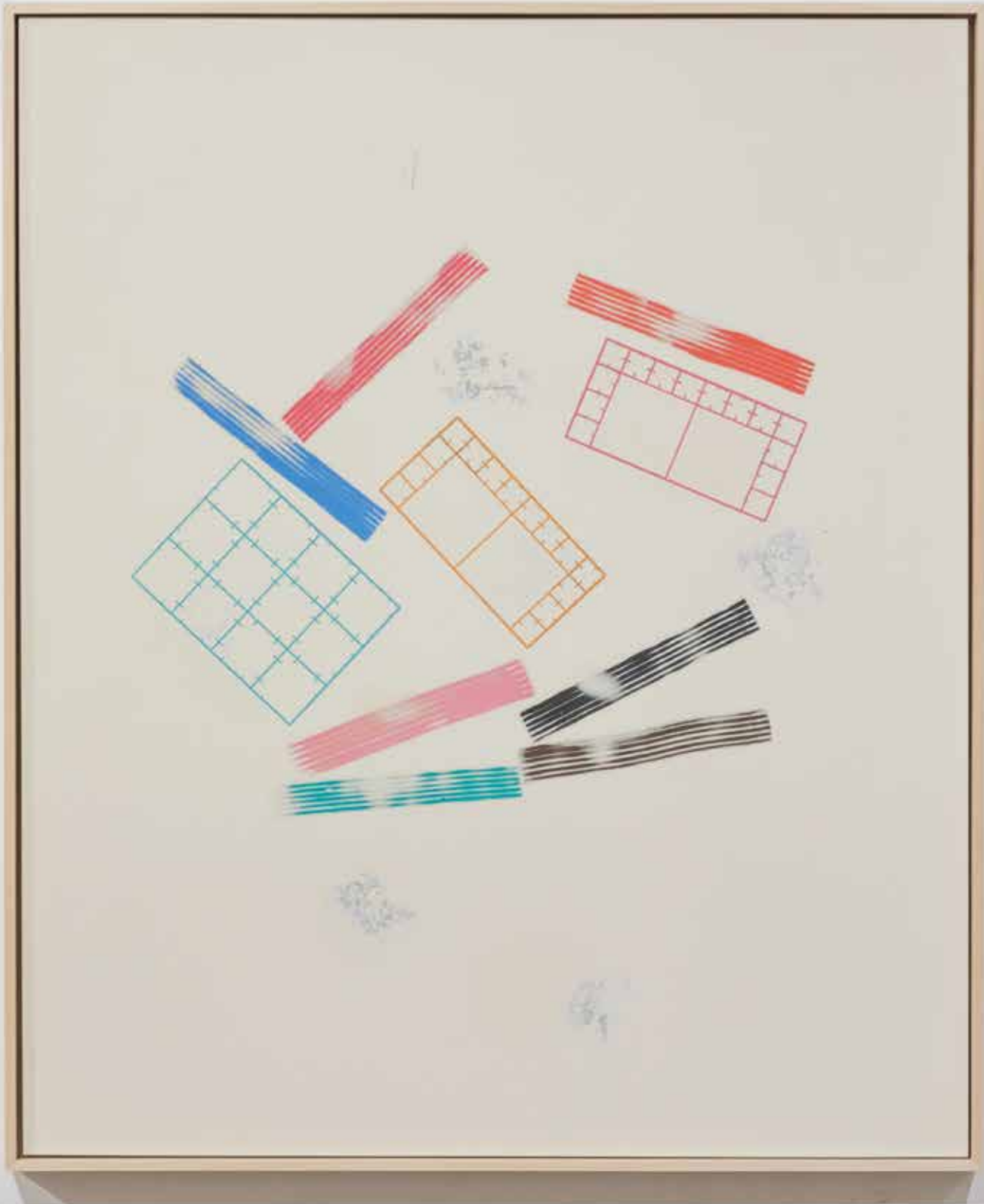
*In works such as 'St Michael (XL)', 'New Agency' and 'Things separated are only shapes', objects are embedded into Jesmonite, a composite casting material. The previous life of these objects is sometimes still recognisable (modelling clay, lego pieces, wooden blocks). But a kind of transformation is performed, from 3-dimensional forms to singular projections or cross-sections. Liberated from their former functions, they are allowed instead to act as pure shapes within the picture plane, such as circles, rectangles and lines of colour.*

*There is a kind of reversed trompe-l'oil at play here, in which the object is hidden in plain view, masquerading as an image of itself. This tension between objects and images of objects draws our attention to the ways in which our eye and brain process our everyday encounters with familiar forms.*



*St Michael (XL), 2024  
Sugar paper, coloured sand,  
acrylic paint, acrylic composite  
91 x 103cm*

*New Agency, 2024*  
*Plastic, modeling clay, tin foil, acrylic composite*  
65 x 52cm



'MW', reproduces another homely and familiar shape, the chocolate bar. The traditional chocolate bar follows the abstract form of the grid simply to make it easier to break off a square, a suggested serving. This grid form is reproduced in generous portions here, the bar embellished with additional forms such as a coin, dowel pins and letter shapes. Objects here are retained like fossils, cast of the same chocolate as the rest of the bar. A miniature window echoes the square grid structure of the chocolate bar itself. A tile spacer functions in a similar way, and can be interpreted here as a reference to grids and formers of grids more generally.

'Cloak, plug, grip, night, chip, ride', presents us with another snack, a bowl of nuts, the bowl itself now absent. These are monkey nuts, walnuts, almonds and brazil nuts in their cases. The colours make it clear that these are replicas formed out of modelling clay. Another form of 'mould' is expressed here, as the nuts are formed into the interior of a container, as though still cradled by its shape.



MW, 2024  
Chocolate  
2.5 x 29 x 13cm

*Cloak, plug, grip, night, chip, ride, 2024*  
Modeling clay  
12 x 19 x 19cm





*People are Strange, 2024*  
Chipboard, MDF, plywood, timber,  
ping pong balls, hardware  
74 x 264 x 98cm

*In 'People are strange', the familiar form of a classic folding table is stretched somewhat beyond typical dimensions. One side drags absurdly on the floor, like a bird with a broken wing. The eye might at first accept the ping-pong ball as a drawer handle on the side of the table, before we realise that this is an object appropriated from another context, like a stage prop or clown's nose filling in for the real thing. These distortions of a familiar piece of furniture suggest an object recalled through a dream, giving something amusing or disturbing to our perceptions. There is a comedy of estrangement here, producing a distrust of the familiar form, and a demand to look again at the everyday.*

*In another reworking of familiar signs, a Christmas tree is repurposed into the shape of an umbrella, 'A Wish'. The tree has been strategically pruned and suspended upside-down from the ceiling, with a cable tie deforming the tree's tip into a welcoming handle. The resulting umbrella floats at roughly the right height to hold, offering itself to us, like a magical apparition at the start of a downpour.*

*The material existence of one object is thus contorted into the symbolic form of another. This juxtaposition can be seen in terms of the Surrealist encounter, one object found in the context of another, which might also constitute a basic formula for a joke.*

*In 'Skull', a sofa constructed in perfect miniature sits placidly on the gallery floor. Another very familiar object, this time transformed only in terms of scale. There is something quite serene about this form, inviting us to rest, whilst transforming its surroundings into something gigantic by contrast.*

*Skull, 2024  
Cotton, wadding, timber  
28 x 61 x 29cm*



*A Wish, 2025*  
Pine wood, cable tie  
130 x 91 x 89cm



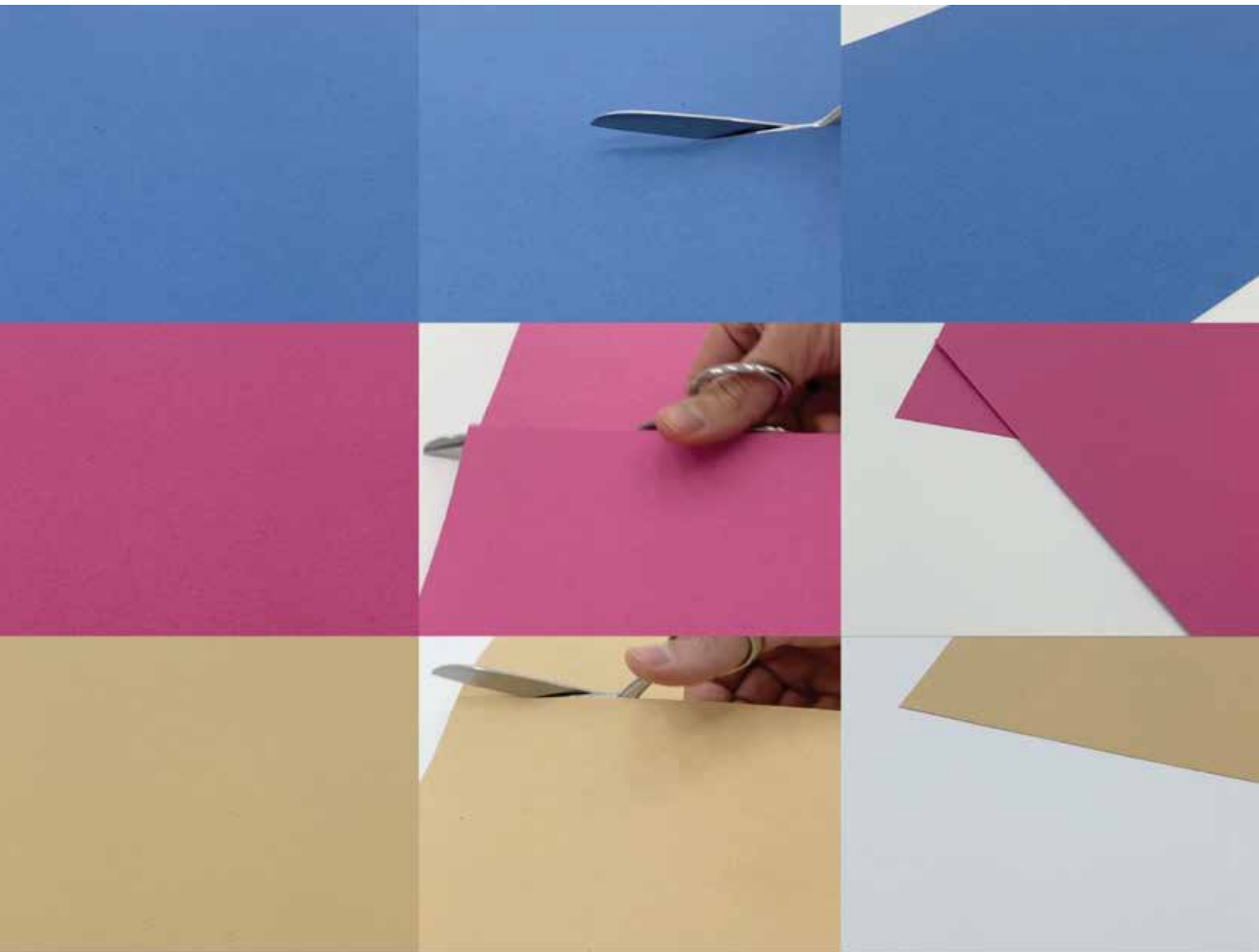


*Pictures of Sculptures, 2024*  
C-type print  
51 x 78cm  
Edition of 1 plus 1 AP

*'Pictures of Sculptures', consists of a pair of black and white photographs. In one, the underside of an induction hob is presented as a readymade composition. Vents, screws holes and mild protrusions in an otherwise flat form perhaps again bring to mind the genre of trompe l'oil painting. This sits alongside another photograph, this time a makeshift bike ramp in the woods. This steep form scooped out of the ground and covered with old carpet has clearly been constructed for a particular adrenaline-fueled sport. But here the structure appears outside of this function, as a calm and static form in its own right.*

*'Paper, Scissors', is an ongoing silent film displayed on a cube monitor in the gallery space. What might at first appear as a flat screen of pure colour, is revealed to be footage of a sheet of coloured paper. This is made apparent by the intrusion of a pair of scissors, which bisects the paper. Where the camera tracks the movement of the scissors across the paper, a certain effect of stillness is produced, as the scissors remain relatively motionless within the centre of the screen. When the cut is finished, the coloured paper is left where it falls, and in the stillness which returns to the screen a certain flatness threatens to reign once more. This is repeated with a series of different colours, each cut sheet falling slightly differently. The series of resulting abstract shapes functions like a demonstration of chance occurrence.*

*Paper, Scissors, 2024  
Single channel video, 6.30 minutes  
Edition of 1 plus 1 AP*



*Much like in the Composite works, there is a tension here between 3-dimensional space and the 2-dimensional world of the picture plane. The moving image format allows this to occur as a kind of progression, the experience of flatness being transformed into one of depth, and then back into flatness.*

*Mike Goddard is an artist and writer based in Norwich, UK.*

*All artworks were shown at The Cut in Halesworth as part of the exhibition 'The Voice from the Well' in 2025.*