

# Andrew Gillespie

## Anti-Scrape

3 February — 23 April 2017



Exhibition guide

The New Art Gallery Walsall is delighted to present *Anti-Scrape*, the first solo exhibition in the UK by Birmingham-based artist Andrew Gillespie.

Andrew Gillespie's work revolves around the application of print and the appropriation of forms and imagery lifted from popular culture. For his solo exhibition at The New Art Gallery Walsall, he has created a new constellation of objects; an urban drift of materials and allusions to everyday experience.

Visitors are invited to move through an architectural landscape, looking at, in, down and through the work. Screen-printed, cast concrete fragments cling to utilitarian security fences, which act as chassis for remnants of another time and place. The ubiquitous image of Katsushika Hokusai's early nineteenth century woodcut, *The Great Wave Off Shore of Kanagawa*, is reproduced, fragmented and transformed.

Elsewhere, objects recall a recent visit the artist made to New York. Memories of discarded clothes trodden, almost printed, into pavement appear here like fossils. Flattened and removed from the body's form, they suggest medieval tombs, while reproduced mementos question how a trip is memorialized.

Zoë Lippett  
Exhibitions and Artists' Projects Curator  
The New Art Gallery Walsall

## ANDREW GILLESPIE IN CONVERSATION WITH ZOË LIPPETT

**ZOË LIPPETT:** Can you tell me about the title of the exhibition, *Anti-Scrape*?

**ANDREW GILLESPIE:** I was first drawn to *Anti-Scrape* because of its sound – it's so visceral and urgent, but also remarkably contemporary, like the tagline on a cleaning product or luxury spray paint. The title connects with the silkscreen printing process, where ink is dragged or scraped across a screen. This act of scraping back, revealing a new surface whilst concealing an

existing layer feels central to much of the work in the show too. *Anti-Scrape* was also the abbreviated name of William Morris's Society For The Protection of Ancient Buildings (founded 1877). Morris condemned the restoration of ancient buildings, branding it destructive; a form of cultural vandalism. This idealistic notion of resistance against the seemingly superficial improvement of the urban environment seems particularly relevant in the current climate. Veneers can only last so long.



Kanagawa Oki Nami Ura, *the Great Wave Off Shore of Kanagawa*. [Between 1826 and 1833, Printed Later], 1 Print : Woodcut, Color., Print Shows a Huge Wave Bearing Down on Boats with a View of Mount Fuji in the Background., Hokusai, Katsushika (1760-1849) / Private Collection / Photo © Liszt Collection / Bridgeman Images



Andrew Gillespie, *Nirvana*, 2015, silkscreen print on cast concrete, photo: Brian Morrisson

**ZL:** Your exhibition is formed of three components, which coalesce to create an immersive architectural environment with which the body can interact. The gaps in the fences facilitate different viewpoints through the space, while the bumpy underside of the screen-printed concrete fragments expose the making process. There seems to be a conflict throughout the exhibition, between rough and smooth surfaces, between things that appear polished and familiar from one angle but then reveal themselves to be something else. Is this process of discovering material differences, transforming materials and revealing relationships between them important to the work?

**AG:** Yes, this is definitely a central concern for the show. The fences mark out space, but act as screens too. They are objects to look through, but they also momentarily obscure one's vision. The cast concrete fragments have a definite front and back; a crisp, legible facade, disguising a roughly textured reverse. This friction between graphic imagery and surfaces is crucial to me.

**ZL:** All of the work was made recently, in the last 6 months, and is inspired by a three-month trip you made to New York in 2016. How did that experience inform your thinking and in what way does the new work relate to past works? Concrete, for example, is a recurring material, and your tendency to fragment visual information to the point of illegibility, is present in earlier works like *Nirvana*, 2015.



Andrew Gillespie, research image, 2016, photo: the artist

**AG:** This exhibition is an extension of those earlier works. The small, screen-printed concrete fragments like *Nirvana* had a latent quality. They exist like mementos, partially legible pieces of detritus that suggest a certain landscape or time. The exhibition is in some ways an attempt to realise that imagined context or construct a space around my previous experiments.

Whilst I was in New York early last year, I spent a great deal of time in museums and recording the urban landscape. I amassed a photographic archive of discarded clothes and street furniture, alongside images of historic artefacts. These certainly informed this work and the trip consolidated many of my ideas surrounding objects and their presentation.

**ZL:** The fences (*Osmotic tendencies*, 2017) at the centre of your exhibition carry fragments of one of the most recognised works of Japanese art in the world, *The Great Wave off Kanagawa*, 1830-33 by Katsushika Hokusai (1790-1849). Its ubiquitous nature is underscored by the appearance of *The Great Wave* as an emoji on the instant messaging social media application WhatsApp. Emojis, of course, originate on Japanese mobiles from the late 1990s so there is a link to the cultural derivation of the original colour woodblock. However, the proliferation of the wave worldwide on smartphones and the removal of the wave motif from its original context, seems to debase Hokusai's masterpiece. What is the significance of this image of water and how is the original image transformed in your work?



Andrew Gillespie, *I am the resurrection (II)*, 2015, silkscreen print on cast concrete, photo: Brian Morrision

**AG:** You're right, Hokusai's *Great Wave* has perhaps been debased by its own success or ubiquity, becoming something of a cliché or an empty piece of visual shorthand. I was interested in this transformation of status but also the artwork's shifting physical and material condition.

The image applied to the concrete here has undergone several translations. From a complete, woodblock print made of solid colours, the image is now a fragmented, four colour CMYK silkscreen print. I arrived at Hokusai's woodblock in the form of a poster; larger, glossier and less crisp than the original. I photographed the poster and enlarged it to the size of the fences, before transforming sections into silkscreens to print onto the concrete elements.

It is particularly important for me that the image is adhered to the concrete, not simply a surface that is pasted on top of it. I want the image and the material to feel unified.

*The Great Wave* itself is so sculptural, barely appearing like liquid. This change seemed to connect with concrete, a material that becomes solid from liquid beginnings.

**ZL:** The fences allude to the urban landscape but also to the crest of Hokusai's wave: like waves, fences are something one can go over. There is also an economy with the fences. They are ten a penny on building sites and at festivals but provide substantial borders or barriers for those who attempt to overcome them. Here, their value seems elevated, as does



Andrew Gillespie, *Pavement*, 2015, t-shirts and acrylic polymer, studio image, photo: the artist

the significance of the discarded and flattened clothing, which appear elsewhere in the exhibition in the form of a precious tombstone. *Metropolitan Lingerer*, 2017 extends from your 2015 *Pavement* series, involving flattened t-shirts and acrylic polymer. Again, low value, they appear like plaster casts of historic fine drapery.

**AG:** I'm not necessarily interested in elevation, but, more broadly, in transformation and the suggestive possibilities of the work. The *Pavement* series were intended to be simultaneously seductive and repellent – to have the elegance of classical drapery or delicate, abstract paintings, but also to appear abject, like sodden clothes discarded on the street. The tension created by these allusions is important.



King Kong souvenir, studio image, photo: the artist

**ZL:** *Alone, Together*, 2017 consists of a human-sized polystyrene reproduction of a small, mass-produced NYC souvenir you picked up on your travels: King Kong holding the iconic Empire State Building. Removed from its original context and transformed, the oversize gorilla seems comical, even endearing.

**AG:** Again, this work addresses the issues of volume, facades and legibility. I first saw the souvenir in a shop window from behind. The image of King Kong holding the Empire State seemed affectionate, an image of support. I was interested in amplifying this image, making the gesture monumental.

## EVENTS:

### **Silkscreen printing with Andrew Gillespie**

Saturday 4 March, 10am-4pm

Join artist Andrew Gillespie for a silkscreen workshop exploring different surfaces and objects for printing. Experiment with printing onto unfamiliar surfaces such as plaster and wood, whilst having the opportunity to learn about Gillespie's practice and processes. All materials are provided, no previous experience required.

£25/£20 concs: students, unwaged, 60+  
Places are limited and must be booked in advance on 01922 654400.

### **In conversation**

Saturday 25 March, 2pm

Join the artist and Curator, Zoë Lippett, for a talk about the exhibition. Free, all welcome.

**Andrew Gillespie** (b.1984) lives and works in Birmingham. He read History of Art at Cambridge University before studying at The Ruskin School of Art, Oxford. Selected recent group exhibitions include 'After', 2016, Division of Labour, London; 'Image Music Text', 2016, IMT Gallery, London; 'The Staircase of the Staircase', 2015, The Sunday Painter, London; 'Birmingham Show', 2015; Eastside Projects, Birmingham and 'CO', 2014, Small Collections Room, Nottingham Contemporary. He is currently the recipient of a 2016 Feeney Fellowship.

*Anti-Scrape* is Gillespie's first UK solo exhibition and features a brand new body of work. His forthcoming solo exhibition at OUTPOST, Norwich will open in May 2017.

[www.awgillespie.com](http://www.awgillespie.com)

A large print version of this guide is available on request.

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