

VicLeka

This show is not Leka's first engagement with British punk music: 2012 saw the production and exhibition of two sets of six large prints inspired by Vic Godard's Subway Sect-Nobody's Scared and The Prefects-VD. This latest project expands upon this existing creative dialogue. Once again Leka uses print-making to develop an interaction between word and image, song and vision, but this time in an exhibition that is also a testament to a friendship that has been forged through music and which is referenced in the merged names of the title, VicLeka. At the heart of the project is a sturdy, black box and how it serves as the repository for a limited edition of hand-made prints. Each box contains a unique VicLeka set that is composed of two parts: on the one hand, there are the printed facsimiles of Vic Godard's original songs and on the other, the printed images that a particular song inspired Leka to produce. The songs were selected by Vic and Leka for their potential to generate a visual response; the resulting selection spans nearly forty years of a music-making career. Included are Godard's early classics like Chain Smoking, Eastern Europeans and Empty Shell and more recent hits from 2010 like Back in the Community, Music of a Werewolf and Somewhere in the World. If the box is a repository of prints, a sort of VicLeka archive, it also stages a journey through time. This sense of time past is captured in Godard's hand-written song-sheets and their changing textual forms which range from the defiant cri de coeur of punk youth, where lyrics are declaimed on the page in capitalised script as confident streams of word and rhyme (Nobody's Scared; Back in the Community; Watching the Devil) to pages of tentative and often illegible scrawl (Zero Tolerance, (Oh All Right), Go on Then). There are printed sheets with a makeshift look; they present their errors

and scratchings out, their combinations of arrows, brackets, omissions, just like the sheet when the song was originally written down. The printed song-sheets therefore testify to the song-writer's change of mind and return us to a moment of creation, to a time in the past when Vic Godard's lyrics were born and evolved. Side by side with these printed lyrics as time-past, are the printed images as time-present: Leka's prints. Diverse, eclectic, exploding with colour and subversive text when released from the deep, black box. Time-present is thus the time of Leka's print: each design is brand new; each offers a contemporary visual response to the humour and irony of Godard's written words.

Often, the visual matches the textual. The VicLeka box of friendship, for instance, is entitled with the same scratching, hesitant prose, mimicking the unpolished intimate feel of a private diary. Inside, the prints form a set but not a sequence. They are eclectic, hybrid works, imitating iconographically the familiar techniques of punk art: its dependency on collage, newsprint and photo-montage. These images, however, have been produced by a master of print-making, one who is seeking out a pictorial equivalent to Godard's musical alchemy. He does this by exploiting the unique capacity of print to steal, forge, link and connect. The prints result from experimental processes yet mask them in their status as highly-finished pieces. Silkscreen, offset lithography, etching, aquatint, photo-polymer etching and linocut have been used separately, in sequence or together. Some prints mobilize Vic Godard relics - song-lines, handwriting, articles or photographs (Oh All Right; Back in the Community) thus working in tandem with their attendant song-sheets. Other images network a wide range of visual and textual sources: the print for Born to be a Rebel, presents the child as superhero, as both batman and superman but complicated

by a reference to Petrus Borel, picked up from the lyrics, the young, obscure yet notoriously rebellious petit romantique of the nineteenth century. Frequently, an apparently familiar image is trafficked and overlaid with additional semiotics (Chain Smoking). The relationship between a print and a song can be direct and obvious, or implied and obscure (Nobody's Scared), at times parallel and freely creative (Eastern Europeans). Not all of Leka's works exploit the interaction between word and image either; five are purely visual, some even print painterly (Empty Shell).

There are two important references here to British art hovering in the sub-structure of the prints: the first, at the point of germination, is to William Hogarth (1698-1763) the British artist and print-maker whose most famous works appeared as serial prints in groups of four, six or eight, their stories engaging directly with London's low-life and its gritty urban realities of prostitution, destitution, drunkenness, imprisonment and disease. The second reference is to David Hockney (b. 1937), a painter, draughtsman, printmaker, stage designer and photographer - the William Hogarth of the 21st century. What Hockney's eclectic oeuvre brings into a serial model derived from Hogarth, is an interest in music, most notably seen in his frequent stage designs for the ballet and opera and which explored the concept of 'synesthesia', where colours are chosen in response to a particular sound, or because they stimulate visually an equivalent sensation to a musical sound. It is this interest in synesthesia or the creative experiment between what we hear and what we see that lies at the heart of the VicLeka project. When these interests are harnessed to inventive capacities of print the result is a playful, ironic and witty art: relationships between text and image unravel, connections become myriad. They can be forged through line or form or colour as much as quote: thus blue tone of Music for a Werewolf

hauntingly signifies the 'blues' of the song's aural tones.

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