

# Anna Chapman

**'Do  
'You know nothing? Do you see nothing? Do you  
Remember  
'Nothing?'**

The fragility and limitations of the artistic medium form a central concern of Anna Chapman's practice. She conceives of "medium (photographic, drawing, written language) and the content it is carrying [as] a two-way exchange of information".<sup>15</sup> side effect (2010) collapses together content and form, using found objects – a plain blue disk and withered strip of cardboard discovered on a pavement – to form a 'readymade' exclamation mark.

Through a simple act of juxtaposition, Chapman channels our attention to the essential shapes of these objects and highlights their potential for semantic reformulation. Her conjuring of a recognisable symbol out of throwaway, 'undefined' items is equivalent to identifying familiar shapes in the clouds: side effect extrapolates pictorial meaning from insubstantial materials. Chapman describes this chance construal (or perhaps projection) of meaning as "the idea of something almost being said", and illustrative of Roland Barthes's dictum that "a letter, at the same time, means and means nothing".<sup>16</sup>

A number of Chapman's works likewise explore letters' dual status as both vectors of meaning and vulnerable physical entities. early hours (2010) comprises two photographs of plastic letters strewn on a carpet mixed with twigs and leaves and other detritus. Letters have been rendered violable objects, reduced, in Chapman's words, to "funny little things with slightly failing limbs".<sup>17</sup> In the fashion of the experiments of the Lettrism movement in France of the 1940s and after, Chapman is interested in allowing new visual forms to arise from fragmentation.

Chapman's photographic works pointedly expose the imperfections inherent in their medium. untitled (2010) constitutes a grainy image of a figure climbing rigging. The image was taken on a mobile phone before being enlarged on a computer, which necessitated the computer filling in gaps to reduce the pixelated quality of the image. The result of this 'interpolation' of new data is a digitally 'faked' rendition, an attempt to paper over the flaws of the original medium.

For Chapman, the shifting of information from one medium to another involves "inherent noise and grain" that is analogous to the broader transmission of an artwork from conception to final realisation.<sup>18</sup> Such 'shifting' is the explicit subject of ; (2008), a slide projection in which magnified images of printed colons are played in a slide projection, resulting in a succession of minimalist images of black circles. Like samples under a microscope, the magnification of the punctuation marks draws attention to minute variations in fadedness, imperfections in their shapes, and their two-tone dotted and chequered patterns. Each image is interspersed by an empty portal of light owing to a gap in the slide carousel, in a further explication of the 'gaps' imposed by a medium.

Chapman's diagrammatic drawings repeat this sense of transference (and loss) between media, seeking to establish a 'loop' or element of 'feedback' between the image being captured and the medium used to capture it. interim/screen (2010), a drawing of an arrow beside a spidery archipelago, was drawn directly from a computer screen and plays upon the idea of using a computer as mental prosthesis or form of 'visual thinking'. Like the small black arrows that strafe across



early hours  
2010

a number of Francis Bacon's triptychs, Chapman's transcribed cursor beckons the eye, accentuating the way in which we negotiate pictorial space.

A second drawing from 2009 is based on a miniature modular sculpture Chapman made from foam blocks, one of a series of three dimensional that she has described as "like models or propositions rather than sculptures".

Frontiers and surfaces form a recurrent leitmotif in Chapman's work. A photographic work, kerb (2010), plays upon the idea of surface as both the site and 'skin' of reality, replacing a kerbstone with a two-tone printout

which, in the photograph, approximated the kerb's shape and finish.

Chapman has spoken of an equivalence between "printed matter and the pavement", as sites of "wondering and wandering".<sup>19</sup> A similar dualism is embedded in the opening line of Edmund Spenser's epic poem The Faerie Queene (1590): "A gentle knight was pricking on the plain"—where 'prick' means to 'spur onward' as well as 'mark an outline', while the 'plain' stands for both a landscape and a page. For Chapman, the page, digital medium or sculptural material are porous points of exchange where meaning is manifested but also multiplied.