

## Exhibition Related Events

### Tour/David Mackintosh: The Edge of Things

Sun 21 Feb, 16:00  
FREE, Booking Required

Join artist Andrew Bracey for a chance to delve deeper into the dark and unsettling world of David Mackintosh's drawing, animation and sculptural works.



This tour will be BSL interpreted by Siobhan Rocks.

### In Conversation/David Mackintosh and Axel Lapp

Tue 16 March, 18:00  
FREE, Booking Required

Publisher, critic and academic Axel Lapp talks to David Mackintosh about the works in his latest solo show.

### Podcast

Listen to artist David Mackintosh talk about the inspiration behind *The Edge of Things*.

[www.cornerhouse.org/davidmackintosh](http://www.cornerhouse.org/davidmackintosh)

### Book Online

[www.cornerhouse.org](http://www.cornerhouse.org)

### By Phone

0161 200 1500 (Mon – Sun: 12:00 – 20:00)

Exhibition supported by the Jack Goldberg Trust

Front cover image: *Head heads* (2009)

**Cornerhouse, 70 Oxford Street, Manchester, M1 5NH**



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# David Mackintosh The Edge of Things

Sat 23 January – Sun 28 March 2010



Galleries 2 & 3  
Free Entry

**CORNERHOUSE**  
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*The Edge of Things* presents a collection of new and recent works by leading Manchester-based artist David Mackintosh. Delving into a growing concern with narrative, Mackintosh creates deceptively simple drawings and installations full of dark humour that present an unsettling view of the world. Featuring newly commissioned works alongside a selection of drawings from the past three years, the exhibition reveals the artist's recent experiments with animation and sculpture.

Mackintosh's work is deeply rooted in the practice of drawing on paper. Employing black gouache, the artist follows a method of practice in which he makes up to 30 drawings a day for up to a month at a time. He often draws whilst standing to empty the mind and allow a connection with the paper, producing quick, spontaneous sketches. This process enables his subconscious to emerge, prompting him to draw almost unintentionally – unaware of what his hand will depict next. As the mind wanders, things begin to materialise. Distant memories, dreams, sensations, situations or experiences graphically translated into visual forms on the page.

Previously restricted to a palette of black gouache, Mackintosh's macabre yet humorous pictorial language has evolved over the past decade with the introduction of red, green and yellow and the development of more complex abstracted forms. Placed centrally on the page and occasionally interrupted by a line of text, images of entangled bodies, featureless birds, flowers, trees and woodland are filled with a sense of dislocation, isolation and indecision. Strange yet familiar, they appear simultaneously real and fictional, immediate and distant, and are often unnerving. Expanding drawing beyond the page, Mackintosh presents a unique and disturbingly beautiful view of the world.

Beyond the presentation of framed and unframed drawings in Galleries 2 and 3, *The Edge of Things* expands the medium into the physical space of the gallery. In *The way I see you but not as others do* (2010) and *Drawing frame thing* (2008) he attaches groups of drawings to a set of tree-like structures that cause the images to touch and overlap, establishing varying narrative connections according to the viewpoint of the observer. The viewer is urged to explore the collision of drawings as they criss-cross along vertical and horizontal angular bars, hinting at possible stories and peculiar new relationships.

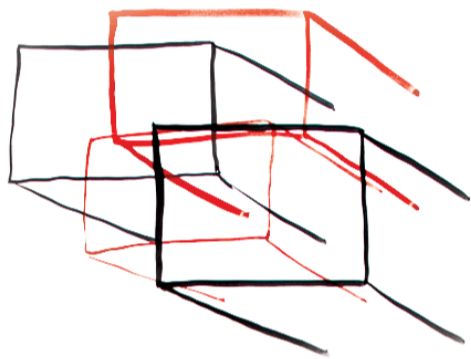
In Gallery 2, a series of his distinctive gouache drawings are brought to life with surreal yet seductive effect in stop-frame animation *The edge of things* (2010). The artist further extends his drawing practice in this animation, creating a sinuous narrative sequence punctuated by specially composed music. Connections made between images are once again reformulated as the clusters of drawings already viewed on the gallery wall and across the sculptural scaffolds are recast and repeated within an animated structure.

In Gallery 3 a new large-scale wall painting *The woods* (2010) leaves you standing at the edge of and peering into dark, menacing woodland. The scale, immediacy and depth of the painting lure the viewer into an imagined unknown world, beyond the confines of the absent frame.

When exploring David Mackintosh's drawings, the mind must remain free to wander and let the subconscious roam. Allowing remote memories, events, and experiences to mesh and mingle with the images on display, a growing sense of empathy arises in the sharing of universal fears and anxieties. The viewer should allow their stream of consciousness to collide and interact with that of the artist, a peculiar yet strangely liberating and dynamic experience embodied in Daniella Watson's essay overleaf.

## Periphery

The only way to begin is to talk to you. The harr has almost lifted and the tenement opposite is becoming visible. Something compels me to look out of the window, and I take leave of my task as well as my senses. Looking beyond the foreground and past the empty street below into the middle distance, the golden section of the composition draws my eye up until it reaches a singular seagull hovering and still against an ominous grey sky. The scraggy bird swoops down taking my eyes with it. It is only then that I catch sight of a shadowy figure stooping low inside the window opposite me. He rises up gently, meeting my gaze with equal inquisition. The hooded man continues to stare intently and glides a little closer to his glass, one world separated from another. I am riveted to the spot. I forget when I blink or when I stop looking but both the moment and the spectre are gone. Disappeared from my line of sight and the frame of vision to the back of my mind and the edge of things.



Boxes (2009)

## Border

A stage, like paper has four edges and more often than not only one side is used. Sometimes a frame delineates the edges. An edge has no identity as such and each sentence is a blink. So when is a frame not a frame? A drawing is no more contained by a support and its structures than a sudden thought intent on escaping the confines of the most rational mind. The protagonist turns a corner and finds herself within a forest with no visible glade. Have I been here all along she wonders? In a trance-like state it is tricky to distinguish fact from fiction and one surface from another. It came from nowhere and looms in to envelop her, as far as she can see. Branches stretch out, overlapping, sinewy and wet with dew. The treetops are not visible but she rightly assumes them to be up there somewhere out of sight. She observes the scene reluctantly, panicking and unsure if it is safer to go deeper into the forest than to seek out its edges. As she moves evermore swiftly moonlight catches her, its silvery tones illuminating her skin rather than the way forward. So she runs. The faster her legs spring forward the more the light flickers to strobe and confuse. The trees are densely packed with shadows and decaying vegetation. She must fight her way through, occasionally and breathlessly uttering, what brought me here? Now the snow is falling, the page is white and our protagonist will keep running.

## Margin

I understand that I am at the seaside and believe you when you say this. But the water is murky and I can see that its foam is thick with rancid effluence as it encroaches onto compacted sand. An estuary is neither of service to the sea nor its slave, hardly one thing or the other. Not a river or an ocean but at the cusp of both. The tidal ebb begins and the flow recedes, shifting territory and boundaries without purpose. All manner of things have bobbed to the surface and washed up on these shores. Things are thrown up like thoughts from an unknown source, disappearing as fast as they appear if they are not singled out for some other purpose. Each fragment is pummelled, distorted and remade by the water. I catch sight of something glimmering in the early morning sun, and notice that a tiny crustacean has made itself a home in a golden locket. Legends of lost manacles and ship-wrecked treasures are told as often as stories of severed limbs and blood stained tables. Like the sea, our tales stretch out before and after us so that we never reach the end of the narrative. The people walk slowly and with great care because the climate is stifling. Why are they here and what do they plan to do? It is true that the mind does not move much in the still and hot air.

## Archaeology

I can tell you things I can describe to no one else. I respect your opinion and I appreciate your feedback. Although our conversation will be all one-way traffic, I will talk and you will find yourself listening. A wooded landscape is interspersed with singular drawings, leaking into one another, in a Derridean diorama. Here we find a literal representation of a frame or a forest laced with potential – wood before it is moulded. The painting is the frame. The drawing does not lead to the painting. The painting exists in order to support the drawings. A disconcerting forest brooding with malcontent is rendered bluntly and directly to a gallery wall. This dense woodland is stripped bare. It is untamed but contained by a mind and painted by human hands in order to be seen. Image making plucked from the edges to be planted in someone else's peripheries. A wall is not a wall when it is a frame. Prose about de-framing interstices from the edge to the centre. There is no story but there are several beginnings.



Falcon ringed (2009)

## Outside

As I catch your eye you look away. Dipped down and deadened. Yet our relationship persists. Dialogue between us is thin on the ground and we have begun to enact curious rituals invoking a kind of discourse channelled between various static media. This media is the conduit and without it we would run out of things to say. We go for journeys in books to places we can no longer visit. If we both read at the same passage at the same time we might bump into each other. We place our cheeks against the page. Where the paper is smooth, the skin feels rough. These days we sit together, in the top floor tenement, chins on the back of my sofa peering like lovelorn dogs through the wintry sashed glass. This perfect viewing device promises to protect those inside from the contamination of the streets, and the unknown. These edges might save us from an abyss. The world appears flat when we look out of the window, through its four mitred corners. Like the clouds that pass by from edge to edge life does not come to us here. They drift onwards, becoming our past, sometimes slow, sometimes fast. My dreams are flat, my screens are flat, the world, for all I know, outside my window is flat. There are certain limits and I am unable to see past them. Self-imposed boundaries are there for a reason. When I can't think what I should do, or what I think I should be doing, I make a list.

## Brink

Because we have not left the house for long enough, the remnants of life that we receive through our outmoded technologies and which we observe from our windowsill are always second-hand. This does not mean that we can be objective about them. At first we presumed that it would, but this has proven not to be the case. The more we compare our visions, the more wildly they appear to differ. I had been dusting our collection of knick knacks and art upstairs in the back bedroom. Dust needs to be removed from the inside as well as the outside and it is important not to forget the crevices which debris can so easily settle in. The objects can be quite heavy and the job requires concentration. If I am honest it is quite laborious and something I put off doing until the accretion of bluey fluff and odd gritty particles is visible and detracts from the contours, rims and colours of the collection. I might be collecting dust now and it would be a much more impressive hobby. The dust has settled and so have I, to take action only when it seems ridiculous not to. Accumulated particles have softened my edges, covering up the true quality of things so at the point when cleaning becomes a necessity I begin the ritual.

## Threshold

You pay close attention to me as I describe a memory, a dream, or a passage from a book. It hardly matters which. I am reading at night, languid in my bed. I explain that someone is listening with purpose and intent. This jogs a misplaced memory that is mine alone, and I fall into it willingly. Laying awake I listen hard at the threshold of my hearing for the furthest sound. I eavesdrop for unheard of things, beyond the mundane high pitched hum between my ears, away from the static fizz of my nightie against the bed sheets, my sister gently breathing, the creaks of the floor, the pipes knocking downstairs, the rain pattering slowly against the glass, the garden gate clashing rusty metal, a cat's screech, the car skidding, the train speeding away, the rare night flight. I imagine there is someone out there, in the night. They have set off already, within this chain of sounds giving way to events. Through the sequence of connectives, I retrace the triggers, the plane, the train, the car, the gate, the screech, the pipes, the creak, the breath, the rustle, the hum, the panic. There is a narrative urge that strings things tenuously together to fix them in space with some structure in order to pull them back from the brink, the oblivion of all forgotten things.

## Interface

The relic is still operable and it has no centre. We have access to sections, various sites and pages; it is just that now it is not so easy to locate them. We will find them, collect them and create a map. We will cut into them, force them out and reassemble them without classification. I would like to do the same with all the things and thoughts that have passed through my mind of late. This would be one way to acknowledge the troubling phenomena occurring at the periphery of the thought. My account has been disjointed and maybe this is a reflection on how I have come to think. I can only speak for myself, but it might also be the case for you. I write in order to extend my concentration span, to fix the fleeting, to get to the point, to get to the end. I know that things are often empty but the difference now is that I have no urge to fill them. No need to furnish them with my misgivings. Some things you will recall from the past and others could jog your memory, this is not important; the way things resonate with you can be seen as a by-product. By dwelling on them to take a central role, what I consider to be edges have all but dissolved. Thoughts are delineated and outgrown. You need to get somewhere and I want to help you.

Daniella Watson, writer and curator



Wilderness the (2009)