

PRIMER.

ALASDAIR MCLUCKIE
HOUSE OF JOY/HELLO LADIES | AT
CHAPTER HOUSE LANE



Alasdair McLuckie,
House of Joy/Hello Ladies, install, 2015 Photograph: David MacLeod

Pablo Picasso glares out from the back walls of Chapter House Lane's glass window boxes. Seven editions of the book *Viva Picasso* have been propped open to a double-paged spread of a tightly cropped photograph of the artist's eyes, to which Alasdair McLuckie has added his own modifications (look closely). They are photographic collages starring the man often credited with inventing the very concept of collage. Underneath the wall works are ten sculptures assembled from found and made materials – crystals, pottery, Perspex, beaded squares, photographic cut-outs. And below these three-dimensional collages is a 'tiled' floor featuring McLuckie's familiar modernist-styled motifs, hand drawn in biro and highlighters onto cardboard grids. The cumulative effect is like a neon wunderkammer; a lively mix of hand-made and machine-made, fact and fiction, tribal, modern and post-modern, European, Antipodean and 'other'. Indeed all of McLuckie's two-part exhibition *House of Joy/Hello Ladies* (at Chapter House Lane until 2 August) is imagined as a kind of collage, not just of materials or objects but also methods, visual histories and philosophies.

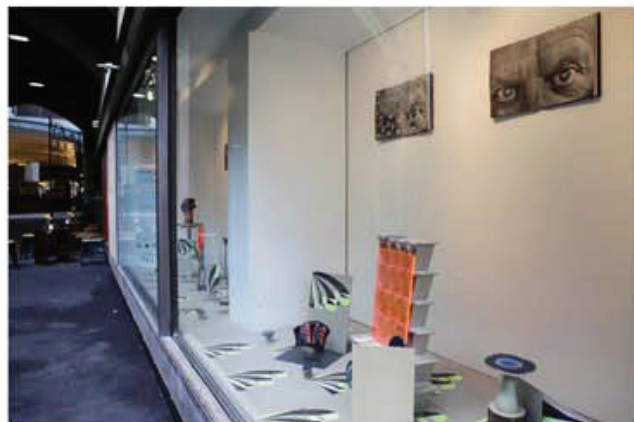
McLuckie often talks about his creative process in a similar way, as consisting of two quite different approaches to making that have been stuck together in unlikely and not always comfortable ways. McLuckie initially studied graphic design and out of all his subsequent schooling it's those design techniques that he goes back to again and again. "Those fundamental graphic design approaches have really sunk in, on an aesthetic and practical level," he explains, "you would have a sketch book and fill it with variations

of the one idea over and over again... That's always the way I start any project, no matter what the outcome might be." After a preliminary period of creative play, fine-tuning and finessing an idea until it's just so, there comes a longer and much more labour intensive period of production. He might slowly, painstakingly bead a design on a loom, for example, or hand-draw the same precise pattern again and again. McLuckie likens this simple, repetitive process to a ritual.

About four years ago, though, McLuckie started to find his approach suffocating. "My thinking became so rigid that the creative part in the initial approach became overwhelmed by the production process." It had begun to kill some of the spontaneity and pleasure of making art, and so as a reaction he began to incorporate collage back into his work. "There's something really liberating about being about to sit down and engage in a process that's over in a day's work and you have something to show for it, as opposed to a day's work and you're an only inch closer to completion." By working with existing materials, says McLuckie, he's been able to make work that's a little looser and less polished, and to think more about composition than production.



Alasdair McLuckie, *House of Joy/Hello Ladies*, install, 2015 Photograph: David MacLeod



Alasdair McLuckie, *House of Joy/Hello Ladies*, install, 2015. Photograph: David MacLeod



>> Maura Edmond
>> 19 July 2015

GO SEE IT:
Alasdair McLuckie
House of Joy/Hello Ladies
2 July - 2 August, 2015
Chapter House Lane
entry via Flinders Lane

Alasdair McLuckie, House of Joy/Hello Ladies,
install, 2015
Photograph: David MacLeod

The show at Chapter House Lane continues McLuckie's interest in tribal and folk art and their adaptation by modernist artists like Picasso, using the two traditions as aesthetic and narrative source material for his own creations. McLuckie says he's always been fascinated by tribal art and culture - a passion he inherited from his dad who filled the house with artefacts acquired on his travels and who later taught McLuckie how to bead and use a loom. However McLuckie's interest in Primitivism - as a Western European art historical ism - came some time later, a consequence of "having to be less naïve about the position I naturally hold... having a really genuine interest and wanting to engage with those other cultures, and having to acknowledge that that isn't directly culturally relevant to who I am." That is to say, having to confront the messy politics of cultural appropriation and the even messier methods we've developed for navigating it.

What McLuckie discovered in his research was that he wasn't alone in his interest moreover, "there is this other huge history that is relevant to me through that same attraction and engagement with tribal art. That's where Picasso comes in." Art historians often argue that modernist painters like Picasso identified with tribal art in part because of their shared outsider status, both of them existing way outside the mainstream Western art canon of the day. Meanwhile McLuckie identifies with the modernists' affection for primitive art but feels a very long way from the mainstream European art canon to which painters like Picasso now belong. "I sit here in Australia feeling in one way completely removed from those tribal cultures but feel just as removed from Picasso and European art history."