

NICK HORNBY

Talented sculptor Nick Hornby talks to Dazed Digital about his new Alexia Goethe exhibition, site-specificity and autobiography.

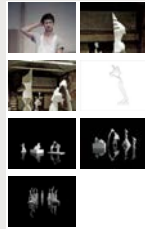
Text by [Becky Hunter](#) | Published 28 May 2010



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In 2009, [Nick Hornby](#) produced a bold series of interventions at Tate Britain in response to the 'Altermodern' triennial, then worked with the SE1 United community group to contribute the sculpture 'Walking in Our Mind' to the Royal Festival Hall, complementing the Hayward's major summer show, 'Walking in my Mind'. Nick has recently worked in New York, Bratislava and Mumbai, and is the recipient of the RBKC Artists' Professional Development Bursary. His latest solo show, 'Atom Vs Super Subject' opened last week at [Alexia Goethe Gallery](#)....

Image Gallery



Dazed Digital: Talk us through the concept for 'Atom Vs Super Subject'.

Nick Hornby: 'We are the hollow men/We are the stuffed men/Leaning together' (T. S. Elliot, *The Hollow Men*). If previous shows were about convoluted narrative-processes (using a car to carve Victorian table legs, or a castle floating along the canal past the zoo), then this one is about cooking: finding a place between the raw and the cooked. Initially, I'd say the show is about origins and reproductions, quotations and recapitulations... But it's not really about text or ideas; it's about form, that insanely old-fashioned idea of how we feel when next to a sculpture.

DD: What else are you doing?

Nick Hornby: I'm working with fantastic people: Leighton House, initiated by Liane Lang, and curated by Brooke Lynn McGowan, and [Eyebeam](#) in New York curated by a polyglot of an artist [Joe Winter](#).

DD: Working in multiple media, are you restless at heart or a 'medium is the message' artist?

Nick Hornby: I'm uncomfortably self-aware of the interplay between my-self and my practice. Am I restless at heart? Yes. But I'd like to be thorough and rigorous, setting questions, following them through. In terms of 'medium that fits the message', yes, but I'm also a little suspicious of artists hopping onto media without spending time with them. I hugely respect traditional skills but I don't want to allow specialization to threaten new ideas. I like (while being aware of its cliché status) the mode of working: research / hunter-gatherer / formulate question / determine frame / test question / make / test-make / generate further questions, etc.

DD: You've worked with the Arthur Fleischmann Museum (Bratislava) and the Institute of Contemporary Indian Art (Mumbai). How do travel, language and location figure in your practice?

Nick Hornby: Ah funny - in this context your word 'travel' echoes of Altermodern. I don't think I'm that. My work is deeply autobiographical. The period in Bratislava came about because of a close personal friendship with Joy Fleischmann who for the last 15 years has been an inspiration in her passion her late husband's work. My trip to India was short but profound - my great grandfather was a civil engineer in India, and then my mother's father was a tea-planter in south India and my mother grew up in the Anamalai Hills. So I have a complex relationship to colonial Britain, intellectually at odds with my autobiography.

DD: What's your new studio like?

Nick Hornby: I hate to use these words - but it's a "pop-up" studio. I've worked as an events porter - we would set up huge meals and parties, for film premieres, in a matter of hours, then take everything away that same night, leaving little trace. Likewise, I find the temporary studio really liberating.

DD: Site-Specificity: you've developed works for a New York hotel; Tate Britain's permanent galleries; Spitalfields sculpture shortlist; Salford Quays shortlist...

Nick Hornby: Hmm. You've made it sound like a coherent list! I am very interested in Site, particularly in terms of the work's reception context, whether institution, public domain or luxury hotel. All spheres open up very different questions - and provide different opportunities. Public Art is very dangerous territory, subject to so many limitations, bad reputations and brief requirements. I'd like to have a go at it myself. I imagine I will fall into the same traps that other artists do, but I'd like to try to get my head around it. Bump.

'Atom Vs Super Subject', Alexia Goethe Gallery, 21 May – 9 July, 2010.

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