

Hotel Jaguar Amanda Newall at Exposed Arts Projects, London

by David Lillington

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Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar* reception, 2018, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London. Free New Zealand art, prints and organic cotton Life size costumes Newall enacting Petra and Zaza Newall-Johansson enacting Nina. Photo: Sasha Burkhanova-Khabadze.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018, Installation shot flags in the Creamer Jaguar window, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London, X-type Jaguar car, organic cotton and waterproof material, human scale. Photo: Alex Wagner.



Amanda Newall, Hotel Jaguar, The Hoover Diaries (still), Fagan and the People, Mockers 1980's gig re-enactment in Newall's World Bank costumes, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London, silver stretch and waterproofing. Photo: Amanda Newall.



Linda Persson, *To leave your human body*, Hotel Jaguar, 2018, a third iteration of the performance initially made for ////O/O/O *The mouth expresses thoughts. The landscape renders its tone!* curated by Nico Anklam. With Hannah Conroy & Madalina Zaharia, handmade costumes, ceramic breasts and eyes, smudging sticks, sound. Dimensions: variable. Photo: Amanda Newall.

Exposed Arts Projects occupies the old premises of a Jaguar car dealership. Jaguar's first: it opened in 1926, and closed in 2016. In 2017 Sasha Burkhanova-Khabadze noticed that the building was empty and obtained the agreement of the local council to rent it and use it as a gallery. It opened earlier this year, 2018.

Talking to Burkhanova-Khabadze during my visit was instructive. She decided to try and do shows that responded to the history of this large rambling building. As she described her interest in "research-based" art, I began to make sense of Amanda Newall's project, which takes up the Jaguar history and runs with it, but feels like a chunk of a much larger, travelling circus of an art practice. A practice which is sociological, 'issue-based' and more or less anti-aesthetic. It is also, strangely, largely hand-crafted (there is for example a whole room of costumes to try on. I tried some animal paws and a tail and avoided the Cruella de Vil gloves and the

fishes' heads. None of which have anything really to do with Jaguar.)



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar* installation shot workshop room including two X-type Jaguars and umbrella costume, 2018, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London. Tarpaulin upcycled from the Queen of Sweden and X-type jaguars. Photo: Alex Wagner.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018, Installation shot sleepover, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London, bedding by Newall, X-type Jaguar car, sound scape, organic cotton, organic bedding and waterproof material, human scale. Photo: Alex Wagner.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018, Installation shot display room, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London, Xtype Jaguar car, organic cotton, velvet and waterproof material, human scale. Photo: Alex Wagner.



Comparative Suffering, performance script by Olav Westphalen, performed by Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018. Photo: Amanda Newall.



Creamer Jaguar Archive image. Creamer family and workers Sidney Creamer (right, pictured, awarded the Member of the Royal Victorian Order for services to the Royal Household in 2002 with his wife Joan), the last owner of R A Creamer & Son had been supplying Jaguars for the Queen for over 40 years, Mail on Sunday. Photo: Michael Thomas.

Newall is a New Zealander who describes herself as an artist, educator and researcher working in New Zealand, the UK and Sweden. She has exhibited in the UK, Sweden, Norway, Iceland, France, Belgium – as well as in Argentina, the States, Australia and New Zealand. She has taught in art schools in Lancaster (UK) and in Stockholm. Burkhanova-Khabadze met Newall at a PhD research seminar. (Newall is currently studying at University of the Arts, Chelsea.) Newall's PhD (to quote Burkhanova-Khabadze) "is about costume, social experience and being part of the society we are in." It is also about the use of costume in art education. "In the seminar, I was intrigued by Amanda's responses. She was

against things that are normally considered the basis of academic research. For example she didn't want to write. Why could she not use audio, she asked. Maybe this was a provocation on Newall's part for the sake of a lively seminar. But I suspect she was at least half serious. She is not only an experienced artist but also someone who thinks about what art is and might be, and about how we talk about it.

The show *Hotel Jaguar* seems essentially documentary, I said to Burkhanova-Khabadze. "That is typical of all the shows here. And I also like to encourage artists to show bits and pieces of previous projects, to try to show the whole of their work." This helps explain a lot. I had the feeling the installation was what was left behind after a party, which is partly true. I was away from London on 30th of June when the party and its accompanying performances (by various artists) took place. At first I declined the invitation to write a review, since those events seemed to be the essence of the project, but the artist persuaded me there was enough to look at post-performance, which was also true. There is a lot going on in this show. Perhaps too much. What we need to search for is a centre, a unifying idea. We will find one.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018, Installation shot display room, night shirts by Newall for sleep over, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London, Xtype Jaguar car, organic cotton and waterproof material, human scale. Photo: Alex Wagner.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018, Installation shot Newall's costumes for trial, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London, Amanda Newall, human scale. Photo: Alex Wagner.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018, Installation shot display room, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London, Xtype Jaguar car, organic cotton, velvet and waterproof material, human scale. Photo: Alex Wagner.

Part of the project involves Newall and her cohorts welcoming viewers ("guests" of Hotel Jaguar), asking questions about Brexit, and delivering half-improvised speeches on the same. When I went I met only the artist and her daughter (of nine) who presented themselves as Petra and Nina from Slovakia. They were dressed in

green overalls (as if Jaguar employees), made by Newall. This whole meeting and greeting element, the fiction it creates of this being a hotel, is about Brexit. It's ironic, Newall says, that Jaguar are owned by a company in India, a former British colony, and may now have plants moved from Britain to Slovakia (European Union, which Britain is leaving). Yes, history is full of these ironies, and they fascinate her. "Jaguar, after all, represents the kind of thing Brexiteers claim to stand for." But this single issue doesn't bring to the show coherence, or the unifying idea I am looking for.

In this two-storey, multi-roomed, semi-open plan, semi-industrial part of a posh terrace, there are: three old Jaguar cars (purchased by the artist for the show), all of a dull gold colour, each equipped with bedding, (which was slept in by guests during the sleepover another component of the show). And a whole bunch of other stuff. For example, handmade banners with symbols sewn onto them, strung low across one room, rather evoke right-wing movements (there are no swastikas but Newall did raise the subject of the swastika). Then, there's the room with the dressing-up stuff, which also has text on the wall, some of which concerns ecological issues (maybe the tiger's tail connects these, and I think the fishes' heads too, judging by the video in another room: a video about fishing quotas, the consequent abuse of Māori rights, two gruesome murders which took place in the artist's neighbourhood when she was a child, and some other things - all of which becomes clearer if you read a synopsis).



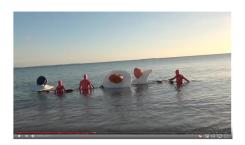
Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018, Installation shot. *The Hoover Diaries*, moving image work, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London. Photo: Alice Riddy.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018. NZ interview with fisherman Maurey Sutherland. Still from *The Hoover Diaries*, 2016. Courtesy of Amanda Newall.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018. Archive image, 1980's Fisherman's conference. Still from *The Hoover Diaries*, 2016. Courtesy of Amanda Newall.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018. Video still *Blood Run*, Symbiottic A and Fremantle Art Centre collaboration (2012) projected in and upstairs cupboard. Sound Antti Sakari Saario.

The content of *The Hoover Diaries* is complicated and I suspect Newall did not want to simplify this video. It is a well-made and ambitious. It is a collection of excerpts: some from found footage, some from videos made by the artist. It includes interviews – musicians, fishermen, mother of a murdered child – interviews conducted by the artist, who wears a fabric fish head. The connecting thread is the diary the artist kept when she was 12 – extracts of which are read by her son and daughter (nine and six). We are led into issues public and private, but despite the diary thread – or because of it – the piece rather lacks a centre, cutting as it does from one subject to another.. It is given coherence only in revealing a set of personal and political concerns, and in the fact that these intertwine. Its centre really is Newall's driven-ness.

Upstairs there are hand-made cushion-seats, each bearing the face of Trump. This is the area where the witches performed. The seats were made out of material from Jaguar car seats. And there are quite a few other things. A text on one of her banners reads: "Ideology glues you to this world," a thought which could be

negative or positive. But it could lead us in the direction of a unifying idea.

About the banners with symbols, Burkhanova-Khabadze says: "she started researching symbols, and the idea of them being for or against your own identity." Newall: "All the symbols were appropriated. In part, they relate to social dreaming. While the symbols are familiar in our waking life, in the sleep state they appear in a new logic, and this can create a more free form of associations. So the idea is that possibly you would associate things with the symbols, and the dreams would be disrupted by them." Burkhanova-Khabadze again: "Amanda is trying to combine different contexts. In the context of a hotel, social dreaming becomes a morning activity for the guests. It's like a community activity, and this also connects with the past, to Jaguar's business here. Her project starts with a basic idea and then through making and feedback, it changes and goes onto new levels."



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018, Installation shot flags in the Creamer Jaguar window, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London, X-type Jaguar car, organic cotton and waterproof material, human scale. Photo: Alex Wagner.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018, *Donald Trump bean bags* detail, Exposed Arts
Projects Kensington High Street, London, X-type Jaguar leather car seats, and recycled leather. Photo: Alice Riddy.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018, *Donald Trump bean bags* detail, Exposed Arts
Projects Kensington High Street, London, Xtype Jaguar leather car seats, and recycled
leather, human bean bag/car seat scale.
Photo: Alice Riddy.



Linda Persson, To leave your human body, Hotel Jaguar, 2018, a third iteration of the performance initially made for ///O/O/O/O The mouth expresses thoughts. The landscape renders its tone! curated by Nico Anklam. With Hannah Conroy & Madalina Zaharia, handmade costumes, ceramic breasts and eyes, smudging sticks, sound. Dimensions: variable. Photo: Alex Wagner.

'Social dreaming' scholars are not concerned with what dreams have to say about our inner lives. They consider dreams capable of telling us about what is *outside* us, about what is happening in the world. And if they are right, dreams can connect people. For this show Newall's significant contact in the world of 'social dreaming' was academic Julian Manley. He researches "the nature of the shared unconscious." [01] If I have understood him correctly he thinks the visual imagery of dreams can be an expression of *values*. Newall: "The 'Social Dreaming Matrix' researchers suggest that dreaming does have a social force...The dream not the dreamer is important, unlike in psychoanalysis." So, dreams have social meaning, and perhaps effect social change. Now, the 'social dreaming' part of this project seems important, it's one of its most interesting aspects, and almost threatens to bring some unity to the whole thing. The project is a 'hotel', I think, largely because of

the dreaming: guests could sleep over (in the Jaguars), and then do a social dreaming session over breakfast.

Why did Newall not become a sociologist? "I like to sit on the fence. That's why." Yes, everything seems unresolved in her work. But this attitude has a noble pedigree. It results in an aesthetic of doubt, even while the artist is certain about certain things, like, Brexit is wrong, Trump is bad. Then there are some other not so simple moral conclusions, but all left open to debate. "And because I make things...It's the process, the dealing with things, the engagement with things, which matters to me. If I knew what it was going to be, what it was going to mean, I'd be too bored to undertake it...And I've always been very much involved with the materials - everything here was made by me." But her heart is in politics; art politics as well as local and global politics. The "performing non-performer" was a thing she did as a student. "All my audience were an art audience." This bothered her. "As a child I wanted to be a doctor but my parents said a doctor's work was too disgusting and I was talked out of it." Her art practice does resemble a type of anatomy. Rather randomly, she opens up different parts of society's body, but since all parts of a body are connected, like those of a society, as St. Paul observed, she is able to claim a certain consistency in analysing her findings. It's scattershot, but with a mad logic one cannot quite dismiss. Are the connections real, or in the artist's head? Probably a bit of both: hence the fascination that the project, in spite of everything, manages to inspire.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, 2018, installation shot costume detail World Trade Organisation jumpsuit used in the premiere of *The Hoover Diaries* 2016. Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London, Cotton drill. Photo: Alex Wagner.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, Installation shot, 2018, costume by Amanda Newall residue from a workshop at The Royal Institute of Art Stockholm, Sweden, with Newall, students and artist group Freee: Andy Hewitt, Mel Jordan, Dave Beech, slogan by Freee. Photo: Alex Wagner.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jagua*r, 2018, video still *Blood Run*, SymbiotticA and Fremantle Art Centre collaboration, (Newall 2012) projected in and upstairs cupboard, Sound Antti Sakari Saario. Photo: Alice Riddy.

Each component in the exhibition (witches, history of symbols, history of Jaguar cars, history of contemporary New Zealand art, Donald Trump, Brexit, fish quotas, dreaming as socially effective, et cetera) has sense in itself and since one can connect anything with anything, the components can be sewn one to the next to make a whole. So: the history of Jaguar to animal outfits, they to the use of symbols, the symbols to witches, the witches to Donald Trump – you get the idea. I get the feeling that the artistic process involves mixing two things: some in-depth research into sitespecific issues, and some elements of previous work (just such a process as the curator had indicated). At one point Newall says, "the witches don't necessarily connect" - and a few bits don't pretend to have much coherence with the rest of the show, such as the art posters by New Zealand artists in the old reception area. But then these are rather good, so critical forgiveness wins the day. And a John Reynolds poster bears the text, "What Kierkegaard said about God applies to politics too: Whatever we think, we are bound, in the end, to be in the wrong." There is the philosophy and aesthetics of doubt. So maybe there is, after all, some coherence.

"I used to do printmaking and painting but I gave it up at 17 because people fetishized it...I believe in how things can be used in a broader picture. Ideas and materials feed into each other." Here's the 19th and 20th century question of which comes first, form or content, and which drives which. With Newall, it seems to me, the content drives the form. She believes in working that way round. She is no Modernist. But then her craft skills (sewing, notably) play a huge part in her practice. Hanging up on both floors are outfits. Downstairs with the Jaguars, white overall-type garments, comically decorated with symbols. They were for the 'guests' to wear, as part of the performative and participatory part of the show. But her hanging garments are political not somatic. Newall is a "discourse-specific" artist, not a "medium-specific" artist, to use Hal Foster's terms (The Return of the Real, 1996). She works "horizontally", in his terms, and moves, like the artists he describes, "from social issue to social issue, from political debate to political debate, more than vertically, in a diachronic engagement with the disciplinary forms of a given genre or medium." She represents part of his "shift from formalist 'quality' to neo-avantgarde 'interest' ".

The form and content question is still relevant today, as Jed Perl makes clear in a recent article in the New York Review of Books. "What an artist is saying can never be separated from the way the artist says it. This statement, which I once imagined was self-evident, is now in need of defense." (NY Review of August 16, 2018.) This renewed interest in the issue is fairly widespread. "By relying too much on the way a work of art relates to reality one risks overlooking the significance of some formal choices made by the artist," writes Andrzej Widota in another recent article, on Warhol (Neophilological Quarterly, 2018/2).







Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, *The Hoover Diaries* (still), Fagan and the People, Mockers 1980's gig re-enactment in Newall's World Bank costumes, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London, silver stretch and waterproofing. Photo: Amanda Newall.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar* family party event, 2018, Exposed Arts Projects
Kensington High Street, London. Organic cotton and sound, Life size costumes, DJ/MC/Party event performed by Cameron
Brott assisted by Zaza Newall- Johansson. Photo: Alex Wagner.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar* installation shot workshop room, serving breakfast to Hotel guests after sleep over, 2018, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London. Organic cotton Life size costumes. Photo: Amanda Newall.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar*, social dreaming matrix with Dr Julian Manley on *Donald Trump bean bags*, 2018, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London. Organic cotton and speech, life size costumes. Photo: Amanda Newall.

What you get in Hotel Jaguar is total immersion in Newall-world. Her social conscience is the driving force. "I hate the capitalisation of everything." She is as angry as anyone about the rise of the new 'populist' right. It's a different kind of practice to, say, Marvin Gaye (Lali) Chetwynd's, in which the theatre is primary but the socio-political agenda essential. For the 'events day', Newall tells me, she wanted this "art hotel" to be "Hi-de-Hi! meets Westworld." I missed the events, so I cannot comment on them, but for the installation, I would question a little her stagecraft. She is not, it seems to me, primarily concerned with the physical, dramatic or sensual presence of her work, unlike more theatrically-inclined artists who wish first to engage the audience and then to deliver the ideas. The language of social practitioners (such as the social dreaming expert Julian Manley) seems more attractive and to the point for her than the language of theatre. It gives her work a structure. Her narratives are, on the whole, linear, even when they are cut up and the episodes juxtaposed in new ways. Hers is a

practise that comes out of a documentary and interventionist tradition and also out of a tradition of protest art, rooted in the 1960s. The documentary style Newall really belongs to starts in the 1990s. Kassel Documenta 2002 was entirely documentary. "I don't see the point of making my work like that of other artists," she says. Andrew Drummond, her sculpture degree teacher, had an influence on her, she says, and so did Mike Kelley, Andrea Fraser, Michael Asher. Perhaps closer to her practise is Igor Vamos, with whom she once collaborated in an education workshop about art activism and costume.

Her practise is also, however, highly personal. Her whole life-story comes into her explanations of her art. She seems connected with her childhood, with its places, joys and traumas. "Dad was a monumental mason, he made tombstones. But he got sick of death and set up in a new kind of work, fishing." Hence her particular interest in the fishing quota politics of New Zealand. And because of his earlier work, funerals are an issue for her. "I feel like if I died in the UK I would be treated like a McDonalds wrapper." The thought that "painting is too fetishised" also seems to have to do with her politics, with her left-wing father, who was clearly a big influence. "My dad was very anti-establishment and anticapitalist." *The Hoover Diaries* video (with the murders, interviews, fish heads, quotas) seems to be a key work for her. It is, she says, a monument for her father, and that emotional investment is its hidden, unifying premise.

And this whole show might be documentary in style, but it's also personal. Her personal concerns are socio-political ones. There's your unifying factor. It's in her blood, if you like. The question that remains is, is the work communicative without an accompanying barrage of words to explain why it is how it is? Is it too illustrative? Whatever the problems in Newall's project, and her practice in general, hers is a wildly energetic art, and the expense of spirit involved in translating social, political and personal events into material objects or video is also its attraction.

Although it seems that the centre of *Hotel Jaguar* is focussed on the Jaguar history embedded in the space and on Brexit, it quickly reaches back into New Zealand murders and fishing quotas, Trump, witches, feminism, sewing, symbols and dreaming. To be

fair there are two good reasons for this: the encouragement of the curator to include aspects of Newall's entire practice, and Newall's wish to involve other practitioners, who brought, for example, the witchcraft and the dreams. Maybe her mistake is to try to connect it all up.



Yes coat made by Amanda Newall for Yes Lab workshop/intervention IKEA with Igor Vamos Aka Mike Bonanno, The Yes Men NYC, Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm Sweden. Photo: Amanda Newall.



Amanda Newall, *Hotel Jaguar* reception, 2018, Exposed Arts Projects Kensington High Street, London. Free New Zealand art, prints and organic cotton Life size costumes Newall enacting Petra and Zaza Newall-Johansson enacting Nina. Photo: Sasha Burkhanova-Khabadze.

I received from Newall and collaborating artists a number of texts. One, by Meryem Saadi, [02] is about costumes and connects the costumes and the dreaming. Another, by lead witch Linda Persson, [03] connects the witches and the costumes. So it all makes some crazy sense. In the space Persson occupied were the "Trump-bags" (the seats) and she admitted that they represented a bit of a clash with her own practice and that some people had commented on this – but she then defends the Trump bags and nevertheless finds consistency in their use for this show. Fair enough. But I think there probably was a bit of a clash. That was my own feeling. But the fact that these artists see it as important to make connections is significant. We all crave unity. If the project does have unity, it is because it shows Newall thinking out loud. That is what you are seeing.

But Persson, for example, is an interesting artist to have included. Newall talks about her cloaks, and the question of "what separates them from being clothes...Linda made a cloak that gave her confidence, out of feathery fabrics and with symbols."

I think the centre, the unifying idea, of this exhibition can be found in Newall's answer to my question about why she is not a sociologist: "because I like to sit on the fence." By 'sitting on the fence' she means something serious: she means that art is a place, and the artist a person, in a peculiar position to analyse society without having to be a politician or an anthropologist. Art has a peculiar power in its detachment. There's the rub. This power of an analysis which remains uncertain is what she wields. So the 'mess' which is her work is, we can say, deliberate. It's all passionate, it's just not prescriptive. It is a politics and an aesthetic of doubt, a stance which is, as I say, an admirable one.

Personnel

Performances at the opening on 30th June 2018 were curated by Amanda Newall and were by:

Cameron Brott: MC/DJ.

Richard Crow and Natalia Mali: There is the serpent and there is the dove, choose wisely (deluxe edition).

(The witches) Linda Persson with Madalina Zaharia and Hannah Conroy: *How to Leave Your Human Body*

Antti Sakari Saario (aka Huume): Europe. Almost. A Fantasy (live dreamscape).

Olav Westphalen: Comparative Suffering.

Olav Westphalen and Lars Arrhenius (Lars&Olav): *All the Queens Horses*.

Footnotes

- $01.\ Julian\ Manley, at: \underline{www.uclan.ac.uk/academics/dr-julian-manley}.\ Accessed on\ 25/09/18.$
- 02. Meryem Saadi, text written for Hotel Jaguar; emailed to the writer as an attachment by Amanda Newall, 24/08/18.
- 03. Email to the writer, 25/08/18.

Biographies



Amanda Newall is an Aotearoa/New Zealand born artist, educator and researcher working in NZ, Sweden and the UK since 1996. Newall's post-disciplinary practice includes costume, performance, sculpture and moving image, norm critical practice, post-colonialism and relational aesthetics. Exhibitions and performances include: *Hotel Jaguar*, Exposed Arts Projects, London; Folkestone Triennial: the Nordic Biennial, Momentum 9, Alienation, Moss Norway; Mejan Galeri Stockholm; Audio Foundation, New Zealand; BALTIC 39 / Newcastle Science Festival, UK; Uppsala City Theatre, Sweden; Shunt Lounge, UK: Fremantle Art Centre, Australia; Govett Brewster Art Gallery, New Zealand and the New Zealand Film Archive. She has held positions as Senior Lecturer at the Royal Institute of Art, Stockholm (2009-2015) and Lecturer, Lancaster Institute of Contemporary Art, UK (2004-2009). Currently, Newall is completing a part time PhD at Chelsea College of the Arts (UAL) focused on costume in contemporary practice.

Grants and awards include: STINT, IASPIS, Swedish Arts Council (Sweden), Creative New Zealand, British Arts Council, UAL. Shortlisting include: Rupert Bunny Award Australia, Wallace and Waikato Awards NZ.



David Lillington is a freelance writer and curator and a member of the International Association of Art Critics and of the Association for the Study of Death and Society. He is based in London. Recent writings include a paper on Birgit Jürgenssen's Dance of Death with Maiden for the Neophilological Quarterly (2018). Exhibitions include Assunta Abdel Axim Mohamed (the first solo exhibition outside Austria for the artist; Danielle Arnaud, London, 2017) and Death and Dying (MAG3, Vienna, 2014).



