



**HERE'S TO
ANOTHER 10**

LOW PROFILE

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49, 50 - *The Future is Calling* - William Hibberd
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3 OR 4 THINGS I KNOW ABOUT THEM

Mark Leahy

1. **LOW PROFILE** are Hannah and Rachel

They're also Rachel and Hannah, a reversible pairing, with no fixed first place. They've been making work as a duo for 10 years now. Achieving that decade is one of the occasions of this book, a prompt for reflection and for looking forward. As a duo, **LOW PROFILE** present an alternative to the artist as solo operator, as star, and as a duo they differ from the company model in theatre. They considered this directly in *d o u b l e a c t s* (2006), an exploration and gathering of other pairings and teams of two from comedy, sport, music and other areas of culture. On a quick-skim-of-the-magazine level, that investigation was an amusing pile-up of superficially parallel modes of making work. Merely a listing of names such as Morecambe and Wise, Torville and Dean, French and Saunders, Crick and Watson, Holmes and Watson, Sonny and Cher. At a slower reading it addresses how art is made, it asks about ways of arriving at shared decisions, about how close relationships that aren't sexual survive over a number of years.

These questions find expression in the fact of **LOW PROFILE**, and in the fact of **LOW PROFILE** being 10. Through the lens of **LOW PROFILE**, the questions can be reframed so that they have wider political or social resonance. Working as a twosome, Hannah and Rachel become a site for questions around how we value work (art or otherwise), how we value relationships outside of the partnered couple, how we value decisions made on a basis other than 'winner takes all', or 'might is right'. So briefly I imagine **LOW PROFILE** as a prism, through which passes the scattered zany content of their diverse practice, and from whose *two-ness* emerges a dispersal of their work in a spectrum of ideas, a range of ways of imagining and performing connection.

2. LOW PROFILE make things that are ephemeral

Across their ten years of making, LOW PROFILE have produced badges, rosettes, postcards, stickers, booklets, posters and a plethora of ephemera. Ephemera may refer to the traces of performance, the marks, the spillings and drippings, to the detritus. The things that remain after an event have a passing quality; post-it notes, stubs of chalk, clip-boards, gaffa tape. If this transitory nature is fetishised, then means of preservation are sought to make the leavings endure. However, rather than mourning loss in the traces left behind, LOW PROFILE's approach to the ephemeral celebrates the fragmentary, the partial, and the linked as they reach out to catch that fleeting, insignificant quality. The ephemeral is plural and equivalent, it is multiple rather than unique, valued for its sociality and connectedness.

Ephemera retain a fleeting, not here for long, quality. These are things that are collectible, such as gig tickets, match programmes, or sweet wrappers. Material that lends itself to the making of lists, to the obsessional attention of fans. Its survival, in even a worn or torn abject state, suggests that all its energy is not spent, that there is some residue that enlivens it. The apparatus of *Packed Lunch Challenge* (2010) combined references to sporting contests, consumer surveys, and daily rituals. There were forms to enter the competition, assessment sheets, judges badges, and a lovely green rosette for the winner. Any of these items might physically amount only to part of sheet of A4 paper, but it has the potential to travel out from the event as jetsam cast adrift by LOW PROFILE, bumping up against other bits of art material or other memories into the future.

LOW PROFILE in their two-ness repeat aspects of the ephemeral in their make up; double rather than singular, resisting a fetish of the 'one' or the 'only'. In producing collectibles and multiples, in making lo-fi publications, they situate their practice among popular modes and forms of exchange. For *LOYAL* (2012), one of LOW PROFILE's contributions to *Hunt & Darton Cafe* in Cambridge, they wove together aspects of consumption, fan behaviour, collecting, and obsession in a café customer loyalty scheme. Loyalty cards were made, equivalent to those we have stuffed in our wallets and have to hunt through to find the right one for whatever coffee vendor we're in now, and these were stamped with little pineapples. And those who filled their card, were awarded an engraved gold 'LOYAL' badge. The badge was a visible

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LOW PROFILE, *LOYAL*. (2012)

indication of participation in the project, it let others see you had been part of the Café event, and became a wearable extension of the art project out into the wider city and beyond.

3. **LOW PROFILE** make small interventions

They often work via interventions that are small in scale or subtle in deployment. **LOW PROFILE** made a work for *InBetween Time Festival* (2010) at Arnolfini, Bristol. Titled *1st*, it involved Rachel and Hannah stationing themselves inside the entrance before the building opened to the public, and celebrating the entry of the first person that day. The intervention was recorded in a Polaroid photo, and the 'winner' (that first visitor) was



LOW PROFILE, *1st*. (2010)

awarded a red first-place rosette. **LOW PROFILE** took something that was already going to occur, that might have happened without anyone noticing, and through their intervention made this into an event, they celebrated it and marked it. Such an intervention might happen with little fanfare, known only to those who experience it, and leave little trace. In *1st*, the Polaroid was displayed at the entrance to the building, alongside the 'Rules' of the competition, and near the red vinyl line that marked the entry point. The work was distributed in the memory of those directly impacted, the witnesses, and those who made a connection between the Polaroid and that person in the audience wearing the big red rosette.

The ephemeral happening, the fleeting action of the artists, acquires value through measures different to the accounting systems of marketing or retail. In varied acts of sharing through remembering and exchanges via recalling, the shape of **LOW PROFILE** is mapped as part of a network of makers, a community of viewers, friends, families, and others among and across whom their work exists. For *Come to Ours* (2011), an artist-led series of projects across Plymouth to coincide with *British Art Show 7*, **LOW PROFILE** produced *Would You Like This Badge?* As ephemera, this work consisted of a set of six badges, each with a different slogan, e.g. 'PLYMOUTH BIGGER THAN REJKYVIK'. As an intervention, the badges were installed in five pubs, displayed for sale behind the bar

on dispensing boards, like peanuts. They were available over three months, and a number of ancillary events, including a 'pub crawl', were organised alongside.

As with *1st, Would You Like This Badge?* entered into an already existing situation, and reframed a small part of it. It offered art works as collectibles, as affordable products in a social environment, and proposed possible routes and journeys through the city. The slogans, 'PLYMOUTH THE SPIRIT OF DISCO' or 'PLYMOUTH 3HRS 43MINS FROM THE CAPITAL', prompted stories, discussion, debate. The work was a complex mix of objects (the badges and their packaging), and of interactions and exchanges (pub crawl and blog photographs). LOW PROFILE approached their audience

in a spirit of sharing, of sharing the space of work, of living, of playing. The work happened in the encounters and the connections that occur, in blurring the boundaries of where the art begins or where the audience ends. And the work persists in some future conversation where someone asks "Where did you get that badge that says - PLYMOUTH TWINNED WITH PLYMOUTH?"



LOW PROFILE, *Would You Like This Badge?* (2011)

4. LOW PROFILE work with time and duration

Rachel and Hannah do things that take a long time, or an undefined elastic time, or sometimes very little time. Marking a decade of practice is one measure of time, a very long time in terms of the life of insects, and of some relationships. 'How long is this going to take?' LOW PROFILE draw attention to time, to duration (long or short), to how time is measured, or filled, or wasted. The length of the task they set themselves will in many cases determine how long the performance is. 'How much time have we left?' In *DRY RUN Part 4: MacGyver'thon* (2008 - present) LOW PROFILE invited an audience to watch an entire series of the TV show *MacGyver* with them, back-to-back. LOW PROFILE set up a situation of intense watching, performing a series of analyses and actions in response, with an implicit invitation for the audience to assist them. The seventeen-or-so hours duration has qualities of the Box Set event, an occasion where you might block out a Saturday and Sunday to see two series of *The Wire*, stock the fridge with beer, have pizzas in the oven,

invite some friends, and settle in for the long haul. It is a pleasure and an endurance, a marathon and a party, it shapes a block of time that is longer than a day at work, longer than an epic movie, longer than a wedding, though maybe shorter than a hen weekend.

In *A Lesson in Love* (2003-2010) the duration of the performance is set at more-or-less two hours ("one hour was too short and more than two hours was too much"). How long will it take Hannah and Rachel to learn the 100 song titles? How far will they get in the time? How long can they stick the cold (even dressed in trawlermen's coats)? How long will the audience stick it before we crack and start giving them hints? Time is there in the fabric of all performance work, but the heightened sense of waiting and willing in a piece like *A Lesson in Love* brings the background to our attention. Time is a ground on which figures carry out actions, it is shaped and cut by these figures, into 3-minute pop-songs, into decades of a relationship, into the life-in-a-day of the mayfly.

LOW PROFILE frame different types of time, time taken to remember something, the time taken to fill a wall with writing, the time when you last saw a favourite TV show. Using kitchen timers, or other means to manage the duration, they enter into competitive situations. Setting themselves tasks of memorising, filling, gathering, completing something; they use game show structures, as in *Who Am I?* (2006) where time for questions is limited. They consider what is most important in an emergency, asking "what do you do when time is running out?", *DRYRUN* series (2007 – present), or the *Just in Case ...* (2005) events which consider preparedness and expectations of what may happen. Their recent works *Asparamancy* (2012) and *Here's to another 10* (2013), consider prediction, fortune-telling and futurology, in a turn to the time to come, that stretches before us, which we seek to predict or prepare for via modes as varied as the I-ching or asparagus, or the Magic 8-Ball.



LOW PROFILE, *DRY RUN* Part 4: MacGyver'thon. (2008)



LOW PROFILE, *Just in Case*. (2005)

5. LOW PROFILE use stuff that's already there

Hannah and Rachel don't make everything from scratch or even make everything up. They feel no need to create all their own material, to write all their own text, to build every prop (though they do make some very lovely things, such as the appliquéd cushions for *MacGyver'thon*, or the props for the various parts of *Making Your Way In The World Today Takes Everything You've Got*). They find stuff, existing situations, books, objects, people that they adopt or adapt and put in juxtaposition. They remake and remodel, combine and reassemble. Anthony Greenbank's 1960s *The Book of Survival* (taken from a bookshelf in Rachel's parents' house, the source of much LOW PROFILE inspiration) has fed into a number of works, including the *DRY RUN* series, and has begun to proliferate in *Survival Shelf* (2012) (a growing ongoing collection of books, sought out and bought in charity shops, that refer to 'survival' in their titles).



LOW PROFILE, *DRY RUN* part 2: *How to save your skin when disaster strikes without warning*. (2008)

In *DRY RUN* part 2: *How to save your skin when disaster strikes without warning* (2008), LOW PROFILE present the 'whole' text of *The Book of Survival*, all 265 pages, from start-to-finish. With an audience, Rachel and Hannah read the book, quiz each other on the content, attempt to memorise bits, and in this extended event of re-presenting existing material the work is 'made'. There is a build up of detritus, more post-it notes, emergency flags,

a wall filled with questions in marker pen on A4 pages, and scraps of masking tape. The audience may learn things, they may remember some piece of advice at a later point, they may reflect on the kind of mind that anticipates the worst in order to be prepared for it.

Pop songs, television formats, advertising slogans, the gestures of service staff, all may be incorporated by LOW PROFILE into performances or texts, may become elements of a script or a series of actions. Stretched or compressed in time, split between the duo into dialogues, or shared like a carefully divided cream cake (which each may eat in a different way, cream first? begin at the dry end? lick off the icing?). LOW PROFILE are aware of the place of the found object in contemporary art, and of practices of 'uncreative writing', but also acknowledge the crowding and pressing of information and text, images and sounds into our consciousness at all times and in many places. This may blur the edges between art and life, or between art life and life life. This is LOW PROFILE's life, and this is how they're living it, this art stuff is in and of that life, and this life stuff is in and of their art.