

## METRO ARTS // EXHIBITION PROGRAM



### ***MEMORY FOAM NEVER FORGETS*** **CHARLIE DONALDSON & SPENCER HARVIE**

30 MARCH - 16 APRIL 2016

# TREASURE ISLANDS, SUNKEN CONTINENTS AND BERMUDA TRIANGLES

Luke Roberts

Donaldson and Harvie in researching conspiracy theories take viewers on an unsteady voyage of anticipated discovery. We enter a symbolic sea pockmarked with pitfalls like a Lego lunar landscape. Is this a journey to the Sea of Tranquility, a dive into an Ocean of Irony or a morphing of memory in Labyrinth Lake?

“Come with us now on a journey through Time and Space”<sup>1</sup> to the SeeWorld of Donaldson and Harvie’s *Memory Foam Never Forgets*. Shall we emerge from the depths of its reach elucidated or none the wiser?

Their publicity proclaims, “Harvie and Donaldson are trying to uncover something hidden about our world, much in the same way a conspiracy theorist is trying to dig for the truth about reality.”<sup>2</sup>

The onus is on each of us here, especially with conspiracy theories. After all, who is to say what is true and what isn’t. In asking questions we can provoke the truth. The truth remains the truth no matter how few or how many recognise it. The same applies to a lie. Placing the onus on the viewer is to empower the viewer and to remind us, that it is our world after all. Each of us creates our own world. It is our decision to believe whatsoever we choose to.

We would be well advised to have such an approach when entering those other Wunderkammern, the corporate newspapers, television reportage, history books and the internet. One is likely to find more truth on the internet however than elsewhere and least of all in that “sound bite world of superficiality called the mainstream media”.<sup>3</sup>

By entering the created world of Donaldson and Harvie are we sailing into a storm of Doubt and Confusion or cruising out of the Darkness? Is that the light of a New Dawn ahead or is it the Frankenstein Place?

*The darkness must go down the river of nights dreaming  
Flow Morpheus flow, let the sun and light come streaming  
Into my life...<sup>4</sup>*

We long for the truth even when it’s staring us in the face or beaming out of the mist like a lighthouse. The best-kept secrets are kept out in the open and kept secret by our incredulity. The symbols are all around us. The evidence is all around us. Yet we remain faithful to the fickle and the foolish. Despite the salient fact that most of our leaders are at best untrustworthy we continue to endorse them and Morpheus continues to flow.

Are Donaldson and Harvie manning desks on the deck of the Ship of Survival guiding us through the meaning of life to a New Era? Are they revolutionaries “rebell[ing] against emotionlessly efficient, ... corporate masters”?<sup>5</sup> Are they temporarily turning the building into a pirate ship to overthrow the ever-present propaganda machine? Will their work liberate or further obfuscate? Are they complicit or neutral? Are artists obliged to instruct and lead the way anyway? And who is to say?

The code flags are flying at the door and the scene set for mutiny. Will the viewer come on board? Are Donaldson and Harvie the masters of this vessel or is the captain in the hold? Are there any special messages here? If so, what are they? Who will interpret them?

Donaldson and Harvie ask the viewer to form their own story, their own language and codes, build their own boat, take responsibility for all the associations and connections that relentless waves of mass communication throw at us, as well as those they are presenting.

In this age of revelations we must look behind the tsunami of images, the official explanations, the corporate hype and the masterful manipulations; seek out the underlying codes, entertain alternatives.

Donaldson and Harvie are charting their own course in navigating the strong currents flooding our world and threatening to overturn all ships. They are sailing well in comparatively fine weather conditions at present, neither confirming nor denying their destination. Will they hold course in the storms ahead?

The artists have laid out a playful map of islands, a cosmos of images and objects for us to explore, a 'fabulous landscape' for our delectation. It is poetic in its representation of interconnectedness and 'chance' associations. With this method of associative thinking are they really hoping to unveil truths? Are they sending us on a fruitless treasure hunt full of surreal juxtapositions or providing a set of genuine coordinates? Like Urs Fischer's *Untitled (Lamp/Bear)* do we run the risk of being left "dazed or comatose"?<sup>6</sup> Even with light shining brightly before us?

It's up to us. We, the viewers, are at the helm. We are steering the boat. It is our boat, our ship too. We must also claim it as mutineers. It is time for all to become pirates and sail the Seven Seas. It is after all the one sea, like the Great Ocean of this beautiful blue planet, a metaphor for Infinity. Only nomenclature and landmasses divide and separate the Great Ocean's vastness into fractions and frictions.

Is it possible to remain neutral in the divisive arena of conspiracy theory?<sup>7</sup> According to Rebecca Moore, the answer is no<sup>8</sup>. It is a pejorative term like 'cult' and used to ridicule, confuse and label that which is deemed counter-productive and a threat to the official history of the myth-making machinery. In this Ocean of Uncertainty on which we are unsteadily afloat, who is to say what is true anymore?

Deep down in the rarely explored depths of our true selves the Truth lies dormant like a sunken continent waiting to rise again. We've been duped and doped by the questionable ministrations of our overlords at the 'Admiralty'. Shall we awaken sufficiently to overthrow these flawed shepherds and their hounds or remain sheeple adrift on an ever-shrinking raft of Medusa? Shall we remain all at sea with Morpheus and his crew or seize the compass as Donaldson and Harvie are attempting to do and draw up our own maps. We can no longer remain neutral. Shall we press on to new worlds, disembark, regain our sovereignty and celebrate who we truly are? Or is it to be another Titanic, a Hesperus, a Mary Celeste?

Remember, memory foam never forgets.

<sup>1</sup> Julian Barratt, 2003, *The Mighty Boosh* theme song.

<sup>2</sup> Metro Arts, 2016, <http://www.metroarts.com.au/artist/charlie-donaldson-spencer-harvie/>

<sup>3</sup> David Icke, 2011, *The Murder of Princess Diana The Truth About The Royal Family*. Online video, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jz\\_2\\_3Jx6I](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-jz_2_3Jx6I).

<sup>4</sup> Richard O'Brien, 1973, *Over at the Frankenstein Place*, from *The Rocky Horror Show*.

<sup>5</sup> Terry Gilliam [dir], 1982, *The Crimson Permanent Assurance*.

<sup>6</sup> Kyle Chayka, 2011, *Photo Break: Urs Fischer's Giant Yellow Teddy Bear*, <http://hyperallergic.com/23342/urs-fischer-teddy-bear/>.

<sup>7</sup> 'Conspiracy Theory' Wikipedia. 2016. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conspiracy\\_theory](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conspiracy_theory)  
According to Florida State University professor Lance deHaven-Smith's 2013 book *Conspiracy Theory in America*, the phrase "conspiracy theory" was invented in the 1960s by the CIA to discredit JFK assassination conspiracy theories. However according to Robert Blaskiewicz, assistant professor of critical thinking at Stockton University and skeptical activist, such claims have existed "since at least 1997", but due to having recently been promoted by deHaven Smith, "conspiracy theorists have begun citing this work as an authority". Blaskiewicz researched the use of the term "conspiracy theory" and found that it has always been a disparaging term, having been used to describe "extreme hypothesis" and implausible speculation as far back as 1870.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid*.  
In response to angry reaction to her use of the term "conspiracy theories" when describing extreme speculations about the Jonestown massacre such as claims that the CIA was conducting "mind control experiments", San Diego State University professor Rebecca Moore explained:

They were angry that I had called their version of the truth a conspiracy theory... In many respects, they have a right to be angry. The phrase "conspiracy theory" is not neutral. It is value-laden and carries with it condemnation, ridicule, and dismissal. It is a lot like the word "cult," which we use to describe religions we do not like.

Moore alternatively describes conspiracy theories as "stigmatized knowledge" or "suppressed knowledge" that are based on a "conviction that powerful individuals are limiting or controlling the free flow of information for nefarious purposes".

## CREDITS

Cover / Charlie Donaldson & Spencer Harvie, *Memory Foam Never Forgets*, 2016.

## VOTE OF THANKS

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