**Hit The Ground**

Vicki Bennett  
Roderick Buchanan  
Amy Feneck & Laura Mansfield  
NAME/Atau Tanaka/Culture Lab  
susan pui san lok

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Hatton Gallery, The Quadrangle, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1RU  
0191 222 6059  www.twmuseums.org.uk/hatton  FREE ENTRY

Opening times: Monday to Saturday 10am – 5pm, Sunday 2 – 5pm  
Great North Run special opening: Sunday 20 September 2009, 10am – 4pm
Gallery 1: *Parade* (2009) Vicki Bennett

The spectators and iconic vistas along the route of the Bupa Great North are given centre stage in Bennett's new film *Parade*, an animated collage of archive footage from the last 28 years of the event. Creating a moving image montage of shifting perspectives and irregular angles the footage bursts out of the conventional TV format and reveals to the audience a unique panoramic view of the run. Referencing the Cubist and Futurist influence within the work, the film is accompanied by a playful recording of Erik Satie's *Parade* by the Willem Breuker Kollektief, providing a reflection of the excitement that surrounds the run itself.

2009 Great North Run Moving Image Commission

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Gallery 2: *Dry Run* (2009) NAME/Atau Tanaka/Culture Lab

The emotional and psychological journeys of runners in training for their first Bupa Great North Run are represented on the website www.dry-run.org. Ten runners from across the country were equipped with Nokia phones that captured information on every training run including GPS co-ordinates, routes and images. This data, combined with a psychological profile of the runners after every run, has been reinterpreted by NAME, Atau Tanaka and the Culture Lab team to create a beautifully abstracted visualisation of what it feels like to train towards the run. This installation enables visitors to explore the website using archived material.

Commissioned by the Bupa Great North Run Cultural Programme. Produced in collaboration with Clicmobile, David King and Ali Colling and with the support of Nokia and the University of Northumbria.

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Feneck and Mansfield worked with members of Wallsend Harriers, a local running club, to document and record thoughts and perspectives about their journeys through the region. The artists have used these recollections to create an alternative map of the city of Newcastle and the surrounding area. The map has been distributed as a number of unexpected interventions using a billboard poster above St James Metro station and a series of text and image based designs in The Journal newspaper. Additional billboard posters of the map have been used to make small booklets, describing a runner's journey through the centre of Newcastle and are free to take away from the Gallery.

Commissioned by the Bupa Great North Run Cultural Programme. Designs produced in collaboration with Dust, Sheffield. With thanks to The Wallsend Harriers and The Journal.
Combining Buchanan’s longstanding interests in sport and portraiture, Harriers is a three screen video installation that highlights the efforts and commitment of unsung amateur athletes and the unseen rigours of their regular training regime.

Filmed during a gruelling training session, a number of runners from Glasgow’s Shettleston Harriers club step up to the spotlight of the camera. Their training programme involved them running to pace with lots of one minute breaks during which the runners were filmed. Having pushed their bodies to their limits, they attempt to compose themselves, struggling to recover their breath and eyeing the camera warily. Drenched and glistening, their breath and sweat rise as steam into the cold night air.

A Film and Video Umbrella Touring Exhibition commissioned in association with Cornerhouse. Supported by the National Touring Programme of Arts Council England and The Henry Moore Foundation.

Using still images from her film Parade, Bennett has recreated long collaged stretches of archive footage. The photographs travel across the walls, revealing a strikingly different perspective of the Bupa Great North Run.

The handmade feel provides a contrast to the slick production of the event and its global televised reach, presenting shots of the iconic Tyne Bridge near the start line alongside aerial images of the coastal finish area.

Commissioned by the Bupa Great North Run Cultural Programme

Faster, Higher is a 5-screen exploration of aspiration and endeavour. The effort and commitment of individual athletes training for and competing in a succession of Olympic Games is contrasted with the seamless spectacle of the event itself and its simplified, abstract parade of nations unified in their goals of sporting excellence and world peace.

Archive Olympic material and Chinese documentary news footage are combined with new images shot at East London’s Wushu Academy, located on the periphery of the Olympic sit-in-progress, to explore ideas of nation, location cultural identity.

A book to accompany this installation is available in the Hatton Gallery shop.

Commissioned by Film and Video Umbrella and BFI. Supported by Arts Council England.

Gallery 4: **Harriers (2002) Roderick Buchanan**

Gallery 5: **Parade – Bridge & Parade – Coastal (2009) Vicki Bennett**

Gallery 3: **Faster, Higher (2008) susan pui san lok**
I am unpacking my library. Yes, I am.

That's how the German philosopher Walter Benjamin begins his essay 'Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting'. During two years of upheaval, Benjamin's library had been placed in storage for safekeeping. As he finally returns his books to their shelves he recalls how each one has contributed to his development, reminding him of where he bought it and why he bought it, and what he was thinking about when he bought it. For Benjamin, his library is simultaneously a conceptual dwelling, 'with books as the building stones', and a register of his life as an intellectual.

Well, I've just come back from a run. Yes, I have.

Over the years I've tried my hand at many sports. I took up football late, but for most of my thirties I played for a team in an FA friendly league in Oxford before moving on to a more sedate, all-weather kick-about in south London. My game wasn't the best, as you might imagine of such a barrel runs that all runners are obliged to confront at some stage in their lives.

The novelist Haruki Murakami talks about the need for each of us to have a mantra in our mental locker at times like these. 'If you don't keep repeating a mantra of some sort to yourself, you'll never survive. One runner told of a mantra his older brother, also a runner, had taught him which he's pondered ever since he began running. Here it is: Pain in inevitable. Suffering is optional. Say you're running and you start to think, Man this hurts, I can't take it anymore. The hurt part is an unavoidable reality, but whether or not you can stand any more is up to the runner... This pretty much sums up the most important aspect of (distance) running.' For the record, my mantra on days like today is pretty much unprintable.

Later in What I Talk About When I Talk About Running, Murakami makes an eloquent comparison between writing a novel and running. The most important quality a novelist has to have is talent, he says. No matter how much enthusiasm and effort you put into writing, if you totally lack literary talent you can forget about being a novelist. After talent comes focus, and after focus the next most important thing is endurance: 'Fortunately these two disciplines — focus and endurance — are different from talent, since they can be acquired and sharpened through training. You'll naturally learn both concentration and endurance when you sit down every day at your desk and train yourself to focus on one point. This is a lot like the training of muscles... You have to continually transmit the object of your focus to your entire body, and make sure it thoroughly assimilates the information necessary for you to write every single day and concentrate on the work at hand. And gradually you'll expand the limits of what you're able to do. Almost imperceptibly you'll make the bar rise. This involves the same process as jogging every day to strengthen your muscles and develop a runner's physique.'

Murakami's suggestion that a novel is forged in a crucible fuelled by talent, focus and endurance applies equally to the visual arts. If you totally lack artistic talent you may as well give up on the idea of becoming a professional artist, but if you have artistic talent then this can be refined and improved with focus and endurance. Without them you will accomplish little of value, but with them you'll be able to compensate for erratic periods of form, or even a shortage of it. Now I don't know whether any of the participants in Hit the Ground ever suffers from erratic periods of form, or even a shortage of it. Now I don't know whether any of the participants in Hit the Ground ever suffers from erratic periods of form, but I sense that all of them are blessed with their fair share of artistic talent.

Hit the Ground is an exhibition that offers us with a snapshot of the Great North Run Cultural Programme, a series of commissions to artists, writers and musicians that celebrate and respond to the Great North Run. Previous contributors to the Cultural Programme have included Bill Bryson, Michael Nyman, Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard and Jane and Louise Wilson. The current project features three new commissions by Vicki Bennett, NAME and Atau Tanaka, and Amy Ferreick and Laura Mansfield alongside two existing pieces by Roderick Buchanan and susan pui san lok. The works by Buchanan and pui san lok were produced by Film and Video Umbrella, and like the Cultural Programme commissions they too articulate the relationship between art and the sport of running.

Vicki Bennett was the recipient of last year’s Great North Run Moving Image Commission and out of this has come Parade (2009), a six-minute montage of extracts from archive footage documenting all twenty-eight renewals of Britain’s best known half-marathon. The processional, multi-layered images of runners, spectators and race marshals are viewed through a skittish, rectangular frame of varying proportions, a dynamic, celebratory window on the world of sport that dances to and fro across the screen following the direction of movement of the action.

 Appropriately, Bennett’s rumbustious tribute to what is, in a very real sense, a people’s festival is set to the Choral from the French ballet Parade. Parade was composed for Serge Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes in 1917 and features a one-act stageplay by Jean Cocteau, music by Erik Satie, and costumes and sets by Pablo Picasso. Cocteau’s theme for the ballet was a publicity pageant in which three groups of circus artists try to attract an audience to a performance, and Satie’s Choral is a hauntingly syncopated piece of music that elicits nostalgic associations with circuses, carnivals and other popular spectacles.

In their contribution to the exhibition, the Newcastle-based art and design group NAME (Nikolas Barrera and Andrew Nixon) have collaborated with artist and musician Atau Tanaka to produce an online artwork called Dry Run (2009). Dry Run highlights the
Feneck and Mansfield’s runner projects delve into rural landscapes through the act of walking, Hamish Fulton and Richard Long, who inscribe mark-making activities undertaken by artists action, mapping cities on the fly. Like the 2004 they have embraced running as an artistic and making art is one and the same thing. Since art. For Amy Feneck and Laura Mansfield running when they run.

Faster, Higher addresses itself to the shared rhetoric of nationalities unified in the utopian quest for sporting excellence and world peace. Of course utopias are never achievable, but the desire for a better life is part and parcel of the human condition. Pui san lok’s elegant, five-screen video installation marries television and movie clips from the British Film Institute’s National Archive with scenes shot at the newly opened Wushu Academy in Leyton, and the resulting visualisation of images speaks of idealism and endeavour. With its formal and iconographic roots in propagandist films like Olympia, Leni Riefenstahl’s paean to the Nazi Games of 1936, Faster, Higher alludes to the political, economic and cultural agendas that lie at the heart of the Olympic movement.

Although all the works in this exhibition embrace a documentary approach to film making, they still operate according to the sometimes unknowable demands of the artists and offer us only a partial insight into what it is that makes runners run. Art and life are inseparable, but for art to be art - even if it takes its lead from something as commonplace as running - it must follow its own course, without which it has no mandate and is no longer distinctive.

That these crossovers between art and sport exist at all should come as no real surprise, and especially after Murakami’s convincing identification of writing with running. At source, art and sport are creative pursuits that engage the personality. Both derive from broadly similar aesthetic impulses, and both share in a playful human inheritance. Together, art and sport constitute a declaration of who we are and what we are as thinking, feeling beings.

The painter Francis Bacon famously suggested that art is a lot to do with intuition and luck and taking advantage of what happens when you ‘splat the stuff down’ on the canvas. An artist’s ability to conjure up a telling artistic statement is dependent on whether they are able to grasp when something has importance - whether they are able to recognise the implications of their actions – and the same applies in sport. We can witness and define what it is that makes Francis Bacon and Louise Bourgeois and Martina Navratilova and Kenenisa Bekele incomparable, we can talk about their knowledge of aspects of humanity which is no less profound for being untranslatable, but we can only speculate on why they succeed where others fail, on why it is that only some artists and athletes are able to sense when their actions have the most profound implications.
Something Old, Something New
Wednesday 16 September, 6.30pm, Tyneside Cinema

Artist talk and book launch with Vicki Bennett and susan pui san lok.

Rebecca Shatwell, Director of AV Festival, will chair this talk with Vicki and susan as they discuss their latest works. Come along to find out more about how they have engaged with visual archives as part of their practices and receive a complimentary glass of wine.

This event also marks the launch of a new publication celebrating lok’s work Faster, Higher, published by Film and Video Umbrella, which features extensive visual documentation of this major multi-screen installation, alongside specially commissioned essays from critics Adrian Rifkin and Chris Berry.

Event presented in collaboration with Film and Video Umbrella.

Tyneside Cinema, 10 Pilgrim Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 6QG, 0845 217 9909 www.tynesidecinema.co.uk FREE BUT BOOK IN ADVANCE

Exhibition Tour and Talk
Tuesday 6 October, 6.30pm, Hatton Gallery

Beth Bate, manager of the Bupa Great North Run Cultural Programme and exhibition curator, gives a tour of Hit The Ground. Join us to find out more about the artists and their commissions.

Hatton Gallery, The Quadrangle, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 1RU, 0191 222 6059 www.twmuseums.org.uk/hatton FREE BUT BOOK IN ADVANCE

13.1 Mike Kenny
Wednesday 16 – Thursday 24 September, 7.30pm (not Sunday 20 or Monday 21)
Saturday 19 September, 11am, 2pm and 7.30pm, Live Theatre

‘Life is not a race’, ‘Yes it is’, ‘Are you calling me a loser?’

Alice and Diane are sisters. They’re doing the Great North Run. Alice is fast – she loves running. Diane is slow – hates it. Basically Alice is a bit of a hare whereas Diane is more of a tortoise. See who wins this time, assuming they reach the finishing line without throttling each other. They’re doing the run to raise money for charity in memory of their Mam but she’s not the only thing they remember.

Thousands of people run the Great North Run and they all have their stories. This specially commissioned play celebrates them all. Suitable for all the family.

Live Theatre, Broad Chare, Quayside, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 3DQ, 0191 232 1232 www.live.org.uk, £6; £4 concession; family ticket £16. Book in advance to avoid disappointment. Please be aware that vehicle access to the Newcastle Quayside is restricted on Saturday.

Great Street Games KMA
Thursday 29 October – Sunday 1 November, 5.30pm till late

Come and take part in a series of outdoor games, taking place simultaneously in three North East locations; Gateshead, Sunderland and Middlesbrough. Each area competes against the others in this world-first event created by media artists KMA.

Projected light and thermal-imaging technology are used to create jaw-dropping interactive playing arenas in which the physical movements of players determine the outcome of the games. Develop your game-playing skills as you progress through a number of levels to help your area to victory or to simply have fun.

Games repeat in ten minute cycles. Great Street Games is open to everyone and does not exclude those with limited mobility.

Visit www.greatstreetgames.org.uk for information.

Baltic Square, Gateshead, Centre Square, Middlesbrough, Burdon Road, Sunderland

In association with Gateshead Metropolitan Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council and Sunderland City Council. Supported by the BT Group. Juice forms part of Newcastle Gateshead’s world-class programme of festival and events developed by Culture 10. The Sunderland City Council presentation is part of Octoberfest 2009.
Acknowledgements

Cultural Programme Manager: Beth Bate
Cultural Programme Assistants: Helen Mitchinson, Elspeth Lawson

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