

CONVERSATION | Lloyd Corporation

Person to Person installation view. © Lloyd Corporation 2020,
courtesy the artists and Carlos/Ishikawa, London

Lloyd Corporation, the co-creation of artists Ali Eisa and Sebastian Lloyd Rees, has installed a dense ‘forest’ of telegraph poles affixed with signs, notices, appeals and stickers at Carlos/Ishikawa for Condo 2020. Found by the artists over the past six years, these ephemeral objects, featuring social justice campaigns, personal messages and advertisements, condense the vastness of social and political life into small communicative objects. Leonie Hutch spoke to Lloyd Corporation about their exhibition *Person to Person*, public archives and tracing the associations of objects.

Could you say a little about what we could expect from your show at Condo and where the idea for the exhibition began?

The show at Condo features a large sculptural installation comprised of reclaimed wooden telegraph poles, affixed with street notices and advertisements. Over the last six years we have collected hundreds of notices, advertisements, messages, stickers and signs from different countries. These are typically posted anonymously to various kinds of street furniture, and we’ve always been interested in how they make visible a multitude of complex, informal social, political and economic processes in the city. The idea for the exhibition was to take this collection of street ‘texts’ and try to activate them within the gallery space. The telegraph poles were a perfect way to present the adverts and further addresses issues of communication, public space and ecology in the work. The poles are ex-British Telecom property, used to form our utilities infrastructure and support the large networks of electrical

and fibre optic cables that facilitate our mobile and digital communications. Now these objects are being discarded and re-circulated on platforms like eBay, for sale as reclaimed timber for landscaping and DIY projects. We wanted viewers to navigate the space like a kind of ‘urban forest’ and to weave through the ‘trees’. You can encounter different adverts in relation to one another and there are many different viewpoints and perspectives you can take in the gallery space.

I was wondering about your name Lloyd Corporation. The Lloyd half seems pretty self-explanatory, but where does Corporation come from?

Yes, Lloyd comes from Seb’s middle name. But we wanted the collaborative practice to have an identity separate from us as individuals and that captured our shared interests. Our earliest works were created as the financial crisis gripped the UK in 2010 so we were responding to this and were both intrigued by the world of corporate aesthetics, obsessed with office spaces, lobbies and luxury design companies like Bang & Olufsen – how this hegemony would be effected. Underlying that was an interest in power and the aesthetics this creates in shaping much of our environment in cities like London. The ‘Corporation’ felt like the right identity also in the legal context where it is treated as a ‘person’ separate from its associated owners, managers and employees. If you search for Lloyd Corporation you get millions of results including Lloyds bank, court cases about anti-war flyers, comedians and our art practice. There is something extremely visible yet totally mundane, generic and ambivalent there. We actually did a performance in Tel Aviv where one of the viewers didn’t believe that Ali could be part of the Lloyd Corporation because he looked like an Ethiopian migrant. There’s a nice ambivalence to our work that is often reflected in much of what we make, where its not exactly clear where our materials come from, if they are still active, why or how they have been discarded and what it means to place these in an art context.

Does working collaboratively change your practice as artists?

Yes totally! We’ve worked together for ten years now and the nature of the collaboration has changed over that time. We started out working very intensively in the studio and everything had a direct hand in it – we literally mixed the plaster together! Now its more flexible and we haven’t lived in the same country for over a year. There are some key aspects of the relationship that remain the same though and have really changed the way we work and see and think. We only started working together after sharing studios for almost three years and having a wonderful dialogue about work, ideas and obviously becoming very close as friends. That conversation is still the core of the collaboration and it happens through phone calls, WhatsApp messages and a constant sharing of images taken together or individually during our everyday lives. Having done that for such a long period of time there is a kind of intuitive sense of what a Lloyd Corporation project looks like and we have developed a very specific, shared way of seeing the city, of thinking, talking and making work about the social and political climate we are living in. I think we both see the collaboration as a place we can individually take risks because you have to let another person shape the work you make, and more often than not this

is incredibly liberating because you never know how the work will emerge at the end.

What is the relationship between the title of the series, Person to Person, and the form it takes, posters on telegraph poles?

The title tries to capture a few elements of the work. Most obviously in that these street texts are a form of communication that relies on a person walking past a specific site in the city at a specific time, for the duration the sign is visible until the council removes it, the rain washes it out or another poster is stuck over the top. Many of the adverts we selected contain personal information of some kind: portraits of people like the mobile snaps of a Missing Person notice to the stock image of a dating app advertisement; mobile phone numbers. Also, we tried to mimic the various very basic, hand-made ways we found the adverts originally posted, whether using tape, nails, pins, glue etc and recreate this on telegraph poles. More broadly the phrase 'person to person' is used colloquially to mean have a more direct, meaningful, maybe even confrontational exchange between people, to talk 'in person' or 'face to face'. The title also refers to communications networks or peer-to-peer (P2P), a kind of distributed system that has been popularised through the rise of the internet as having libertarian and egalitarian potential for people to 'connect' but is also increasingly challenged by today's data capitalism and privacy panics. This is all further reflected in the telegraph poles, which provided a major public infrastructure that is increasingly redundant or outmoded, but still persists in the urban landscape.

Do you think of your work as archival?

Our collection of street adverts has about 400 physical pieces and many more photographs documenting examples across countries, from UK to Palestine. They are an incredibly rich source as a material culture, but something that surprisingly is not very well documented, written or thought about. Probably because it is an aspect of everyday life that is often seen but not really registered, so common or seemingly mundane that it disappears into the background of our urban experience. These adverts also have a very interesting and precarious temporality, as they can be instantly removed or remain present quietly degrading in the street for a long time. I'm saying this because we don't think of them as straightforwardly archival and we are quite ambivalent towards categorising, classifying or preserving them. Our collection and use of the adverts has been more about a practice of re-routing, of giving these objects a different kind of circulation, so that people engage with them in a different light and with a renewed focus. We're not hugely concerned about the long term condition of these materials or establishing them as some kind of resource or library. It's much more about the immediacy and excitement of finding these objects, how they highlight pressing issues in our collaborative conversation around contemporary economies, and how we can activate that in our work to bring these issues into the public and start new conversations.

When looking at the work I was thinking that although you have used 'found' objects, the result is not really analogous to 'Readymades' in that it doesn't attempt to remove their context: rather it almost seems to reassert it. But the situation of the objects has been changed.

Yes we wouldn't connect our practice to that of the Readymade. What we try and do in the work is create a certain situation or atmosphere in which to engage with found objects. It's not quite re-staging, re-contextualising or re-imagining. We are using the art context to make found objects visible in different ways, but that's not to say more valuable or as a commentary on the value of art. We talk more about circulation because sometimes the conversation around context in art feels quite binary – as if an object's context is just a given and it can then be simply removed. We're more interested in what Bruno Latour calls 'tracing the associations' of objects in the social, how do things find themselves in the situation they are in and what actors, movements, trajectories, economies and politics constitute this. What are the biographies of objects? Many parts of our installations go back into the world too, like the conference chairs and carpet from our installation work *Local to Global*, shown at Carlos / Ishikawa in 2018. So if that work was to ever be shown again it would have to be remade, with other materials from other sites and circulations.

How do you understand the conversation between this series and previous work you have done?

We have used street advertisements and posters in shows before. We created free advertising spaces as a form of site specific intervention at the Hayward Gallery and Pump House Gallery, a process that involved our own fly-poster campaigns and individuals sending us adverts to display in the space. It was a key moment for us in the practice as we realised how productive it was to make work that engaged social contexts directly and created new forms of social interaction. At Frieze Art Fair in 2016, we also made an installation in the form of a local newsagent shop-front with adverts posted on the windows. But for this show we wanted viewers to encounter the adverts more closely, not as part of a mis-en-scene but in a direct way that would engage them with the content and affects of these found objects. So in some ways this series is more sculptural and more minimal than previous works, but there is a real continuity in the ways our ideas are being developed and expressed, especially the commitment and desire to use found objects at the centre of our practice. It's also a close development of core subjects in our work, looking at informal cultures and economies in the city, the everyday experiences and dramas of public space, consumption and waste, among other things.

Lloyd Corporation's work is on at [Carlos/Ishikawa](#) as part of Condo London 2020 until 8 February.