

# R e s t r u c t u r i n g



\_\_\_Graham Lister\_\_\_Restructuring\_\_\_Mount Florida Gallery & Studios\_\_\_

\_\_\_37 Clincart Road\_\_\_Glasgow\_\_\_G42 9DZ\_\_\_

\_\_\_Fri 23/11/18 Opening Night 6 - 8pm & Sat 24/11/18 11am - 5pm\_\_\_



*R e s t r u c t u r i n g*

**G r a h a m                      L i s t e r**

**M o u n t      F l o r i d a      G a l l e r y**

**G    l    a    s    g    o    w**

**N o v e m b e r                      2 0 1 8**



*Black and White Wire*, oil on board, 35 x 35 cm, 2018

# **Restructuring**

## **Mount Florida Gallery, Glasgow**

### **The Plan for *Restructuring***

The routines, views, surfaces and actions which make up the everyday world are predictable, that's why they so often escape our notice. Well, I suppose they don't really 'escape' as much as just pass without being noticed. The things that go on around us, the run-of-the-mill events we are part of, the quotidian objects that we interact with are what make up our daily lives and experiences. Brought together, these separate non-descript elements form the overarching structure of the everyday; a structure which is so expected that it does not normally demand our attention, and the aesthetic qualities of it pass by without registering in an individual's mind.

How are we to speak of these common things, to track them down rather, flush them out, wrest them from the dross in which they are mired, how to give them meaning, a tongue, to let them, finally, speak of what it is, who we are.<sup>1</sup>

We don't often give the commonplace much thought, and that makes sense. It is not there to be noticed; it's just there. Often the commonplace is part of our functional existence; allowing us, as individuals to move in space and to interact with each other. As such, it's seemingly not worthy of our attention. Georges Perec wrote of trains only existing when they are derailed. Now this might be a little

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<sup>1</sup> Perec, Georges, *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*, trans. John Sturrock, (London: Penguin), 1997, p 206.

morbid and verging on bad taste, but the point he made is accurate. The structures that surround us rarely come to our attention when they function as expected. Think about traffic lights for example. You arrive at a junction, stop at the red signal, wait until other lines of traffic or pedestrians take their allotted turn, and then move when 'your' signal turns green. Of course, you might be a bit exasperated if caught in a queue when in a hurry, but the structure afforded us by the controlling signals would still not likely be thing that you notice above everything else. This only happens when the everyday structure itself breaks down. The moment when there is an electrical fault, and the signal lights cease to function, this previously unnoticed part of the structure of the everyday comes to the fore of our minds in this instance. Individuals would have to change their actions and interactions as they now share space in a less orchestrated manner.

A similar line of thinking could be true for something physical in the everyday; something like a chain link fence. With a fence, we have something that which organises spaces or places in terms of establishing boundary lines. Very often the rhythmic lines and shapes of, for example, a wire fence almost become invisible, and certainly are mostly unnoticed until it is the case that the fence itself is altered in such a way that it demands a double-take from someone encountering it. Perhaps it has been pulled down or trampled flat. Or if we were to think of a brick wall; it again exists as something rhythmic and to some extent, banal, until a brick is removed, or graffiti is sprayed on top of it, drawing attention back to the surface and substance of the object itself. In some respects, my painterly interests lie at the moment that the often-unnoticed or taken-for-granted become noticed anew and it is was with this that the body of work behind *Restructuring* initially began.

### Restructuring the Everyday

[...] to formulate the quotidian as a concept, to wrench it from the continuum in which it is embedded (or better yet, the continuum that it *is*), to expose it, examine it, give it a history, is already to form a critique of it. And to do so is to wish for and work towards change, transformation [...]²

I've had many false starts trying to put down some words to accompany *Restructuring*, as I try and write this 2 months before putting some work in the Mount Florida Gallery. I've been trying to account for the ways I felt I'd been using painting processes to think about and expose aesthetic elements of the everyday. I'd type something and then print out the words to add to them and to make

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<sup>2</sup> Ross, Kristen, 'French Quotidian', in *The Art of the Everyday*, ed. Lynn Gumpert, (New York, Grey Art Gallery), 1997, p 20-1

annotations in pen ... but time after time, they ended up in a pile at the bottom of the wastepaper bin. It was actually this struggling for words, the false starts and the discarded attempts, which gave rise to developments in studio.

A scrunched-up wastepaper ball is an everyday thing in itself. It's something which is not often noticed. As individuals, we are well versed in the action of scrunching up paper when something has not worked, when a hard-copy of something is to be discarded or even when it comes to throwing away wrapping paper. The action itself is completed before it is given any thought, and the expected outcome from the action seems essentially predictable and so it can be described as being everyday. *Restructuring* uses the idea of the mundane scrunched-up ball, and looks to draw focus, on one level, onto this everyday form which is infrequently considered. And, like any part of the everyday, with the action of drawing it into focus, the aesthetic beauty and physical complexity of that which is so easily ignored can come to light.

Carefully looking at a scrunched-up paper ball reveals that it is an interestingly complex arrangement of creases and folds. This observation, which is easy to see on a surface and purely aesthetic level, is borne out by scientific research. Scrunch up a hundred pieces of A4 office paper and you would likely end up with 100 generally similar-sized sphere-like objects. Each would be more or less as strong and stiff as its companions, but would be different in physical appearance. A 2011 study in fact indicated that despite each one looking relatively similar on a surface level, the real interest came to light when advanced computer imaging techniques were used to examine the interior structure of the everyday paper balls.

[...] a ball's stiffness is also surprisingly consistent throughout, even though no two are likely to have the same configuration of folds inside. Each crumpled ball may even be unique, though researchers have not yet examined them in sufficient numbers to determine whether they can be compared on the lines of snowflakes, fingerprints and dust particles.<sup>3</sup>

The everyday action of scrunching up something which was flimsy, and effectively generating a new structure for it, a structure which is much stronger than it was when in its original flat form was very appealing to me and amidst a summer which was peppered with artistic-blocks. My process of trying to work through metaphorical barriers I put up for myself gradually began to make more and more sense as a device to better consider what I had been doing.

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<sup>3</sup> 'Scrush time: The peculiar physics of crumpled paper', *New Scientist*, Issue 2844, December 2011. Available at: <https://www.newscientist.com/article/mg21228441-700-scrunch-time-the-peculiar-physics-of-crumpled-paper/>



## Thinking Back Through Things

Within my practice is the consistent thread of the everyday; looking for interest in the mundane or the repetitive. Over the last two years, specific focus has rested on the pushing and pulling of pigment and ink on surfaces to 'think through' the appearance of excessively repetitive barrier weaves and boundary materials. For exhibitions I've been part of or made at Art Lacuna in London, at the Bowery in Leeds and the Gallery of Modern Art in Skopje, I've ended up making large works on paper, card and canvas which served as architectonic parts or as expanded field painted pieces.

Once used and complete, they ended up, as past works tend to do, rolled and folded up in the corner of my studio. In their positions, the paintings simply became part of the structure of the studio; they were just there to be moved, re-positioned or pushed aside to make space to put down a coffee cup. Though once they had been right where my painting practice 'was', they had been used up and I ceased to notice them. *Restructuring* is as much about the action of drawing my focus back onto what had become everyday in my studio space as it is about the new works on the walls. *Restructuring* offers up a conversation between the action of re-purposing previous works (built upon particular repetitive aesthetics of everyday borders, barriers and fences) which had become everyday after their initial use, the everydayness of a scrunched up paper ball, and equally the complexity and unpredictability of the form of the scrunched up ball itself.

As I write this, I haven't made the main work, the large scrunched up ball for the exhibition. The potential complexity of the scrunched ball scares me, as does the possibility of it utterly failing to end up looking as I envisage it. But I suppose this is positive. New activities within making processes should be full at least tinged with anxiety or trepidation. This new work is about me embracing the unpredictable. It is about changing the state of that which was at one time precious (the painting as object) and is represents the antithesis of the repetitive aspect of the everyday. The action of scrunching up paper into a ball is a one-time event. A scrunched ball could, of course, be unraveled and made a semblance of 'flat' again, but the idea of embracing that first scrunch, that unique and complex arrangement of peaks and valley folds is immensely exciting, and will force me to really look at something that I'd never considered before. I mean why would I, a scrunched-up ball of paper is just part of the everyday after all. I suppose Perec might have said that scrunched-up paper balls don't even really exist until they are made into giant, room dominating objects, but it remains to be seen if that is true or not.

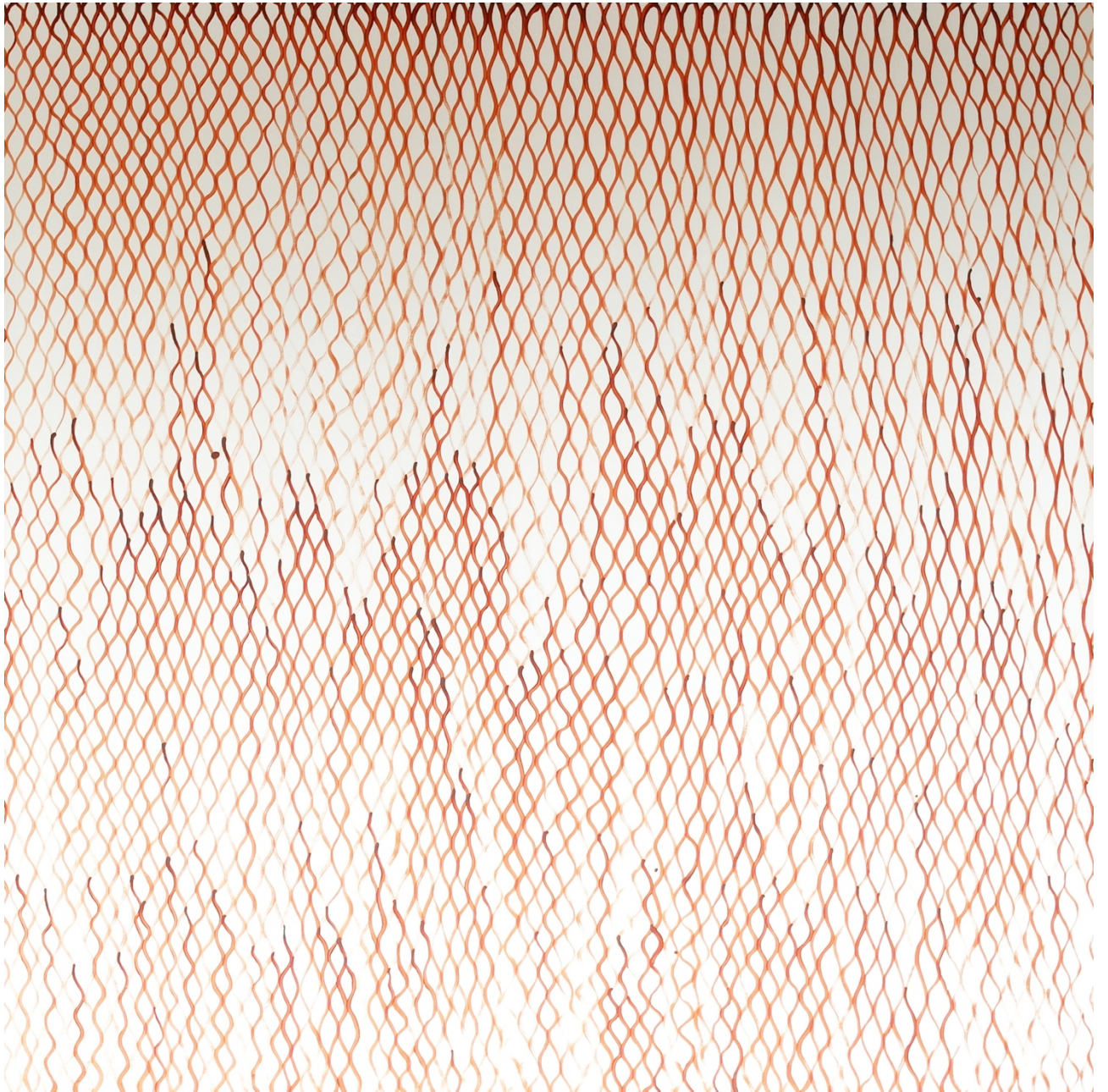
Graham Lister, August 2018.



**Organizing differently**

**Making something clearer**

**Changing the pattern**



*Orange Netting*, acrylic on paper, 1.5 x 1.5m, 2016-7



