

# frieze

## Julia Crabtree and William Evans

### Legion TV

Being taken into Legion TV out of hours is not unlike, I imagine, being ushered onto a film set. Situated on Frederick Terrace in Hackney, east London – a street so narrow and unassuming that it is almost unnoticeable – the gallery is in a building otherwise occupied by artists' studios. The ground floor is boxed off into separate spaces, each feeling like a temporary structure, with that inherently modular aura of dissected industrial spaces. Wherever you stand in the space, whatever part of Julia Crabtree and William Evans's installation 'Hyper Bole' falls within your eyeline, you can't help but feel that just beyond the peripheries of your vision a studio audience looks on, or a film crew stands whispering directions to each other in the dark. Snatches of everyday conversations drift over the walls from adjacent spaces, tawdry and unspectacular in comparison to the bright artifice within. Perhaps the startlingly bright, floor-level spotlights that illuminate the space are invoking in me some melodrama. Perhaps that's the whole point.

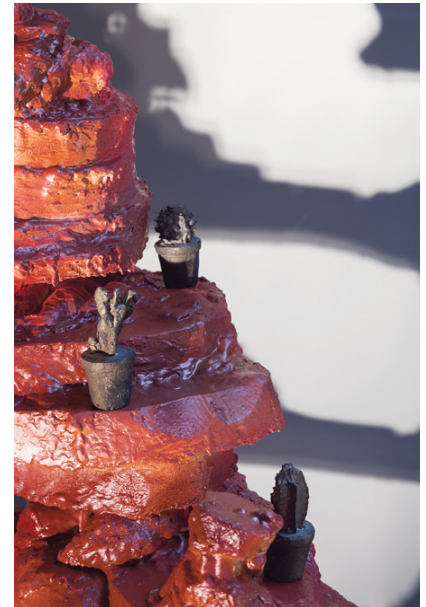
For the latest instalment in their ongoing collaboration (the two artists have been working together for nearly a decade), Crabtree and Evans have continued their transposition of the visual languages of cinema into the gallery space. The duo have paid particular attention to specific cultural tropes, namely – in this instance as previously – the great American western. 'Hyper Bole' was composed of two parts: an exhibition and an online commission, both hosted by Legion TV. Typically the gallery schedules exhibitions and online commissions in isolation from one another; separate but equally critical components of the programme. On this occasion, however, it seems apt to have allowed Crabtree and Evans free reign over both, given the relationship between the two respective disciplines and the project's overall thesis. The exhibition comprised three large sculptures, all of polystyrene, filler and jesmonite construction. The sculptures were essentially formless, and it is only through cultural knowns that the gallery-goer comes to recognize them as crude representational features of an archetypal desert landscape, rocky formations approximating the silhouetted outcrops that decorate the horizon in spaghetti westerns.

The sculptures seemed surreally large given the relative compactness of the space, in which shadows, larger still, were thrown against the walls by the powerful spotlights. The

### About this review

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By *Nick Warner*



Julia Crabtree and William Evans, 'Hyper Bole' (detail), 2014, jesmonite, polystyrene, spray paint, half panama fabric, bronze and stage lighting, dimensions variable

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estranged familiarity of these shapes speaks to our recognition of the natural world and its bizarre depiction in popular culture, and equally to the atypical physicality of the spectacle here, more often perceived in two dimensions. The three sculptures, variously shaped and coloured, form a sort of navigable landscape within the space, occupied by a number of key characters. *The Good, The Bad and The Ugly* (2013), an earlier work comprising three small bronze cacti, is arranged on one of the sculptures. Another of the large sculptures had a sizeable piece of material draped over it, spilling across the floor as if liquid. The material was decorated with a tyre-track motif that had been stamped into a clay mould, photographed and then digitally printed repeatedly to form a pattern. The flowing fabric seemed to bridge the gap between the exhibition and the online commission, taking the appearance of a melting or collapsed screen.

Crabtree and Evans's web piece, viewable on Legion TV's site, took the form of a fairly conventional 'website takeover' – a popular brand of web commission whereby artists intervene in an institution's online space (see the various projects of bubblebyte.org) or conversely aid or subvert the user experience (see the Serpentine's first online commission, *AGNES*, 2014, by Cécile B. Evans). However, instead of offering some sort of URL-based institutional critique, Crabtree and Evans convert the Legion TV website into a 3D modelled landscape, bringing into focus the relationship between the 'on site' of the sculptural works and the 'off site' of the web commission. In the animation, the viewer flies through the ridged topography that we might assume to be the natural habitat for the physical sculptures in the gallery. When the two 'spaces' are experienced in tandem, it is the physical gallery that feels like an illustrative husk, summative of the western landscape but petrified and uninhabitable. The larger, less specified online animation neatly offers an inverse spectacle, paradoxically adding depth to forms flattened by the conventions of genre.

**Nick Warner**

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