

# NIGEL MASSEY

## Between Acts

Limbo, Substation Project Space, 2 Bilton Square, Margate CT9 1EE  
2-24 May, Fri-Sun 12-5pm or by appointment | Preview 1 May 6-9pm

**stage** noun \ st j |

1. a particular point or period in the growth or development of something

2. a raised platform in a theatre, auditorium, etc., where the performers stand

3. the art or profession of acting and especially of acting in theatres

LIMBO is delighted to announce an exhibition of new work by London-based artist **Nigel Massey**.

Massey assembles his artworks, combining bespoke fabricated elements with repurposed objects and materials. His approach can perhaps be best understood through the polysemous word *stage*, which refers simultaneously to *development*, *structure*, *action*, and *acting*.

For *Between Acts*, Massey has prepared two complementary sets of works which develop an ongoing interest in the separation between the creative idea and the created object. This interest is not so much about how intentions differ from outcomes, but where they fuse.

Creation cannot, by definition, be premeditated: To create is to bring something into existence, and must therefore be accidental; if one knows what one is about to make, the creative moment must have passed. For if we have thought of something, it already exists in some form.

The moment of creation is usually seen as belonging to the artist's studio or workplace: A phase leading to the production of a finished object which will convey beauty or meaning. In Massey's work, however, artworks are proposed as an element in the production of a kind of theatre through which the viewer might glimpse the 'making' rather than the 'made'.

The two bodies of work presented in *Between Acts* consider separate elements of this 'theatre'.

Each connects to a historically distinct artistic tradition and proposes that it is understood in relation to the other.

In the first body of work, dealing with 'scenery', Massey employs a variety of rectangular prisms: some comprise modified acrylic plastic boxes, apparently stuffed with interweaving metallic strips; for other works, Massey has clad modified office dividers in haberdashery. In his use of the rectangle – the dominant picturing device of western art – Massey engages with a history of painting which considers images both in terms of 'windows' into projected spaces and in terms of high modernism, a tradition which forgoes the projection of pictorial space in favour of the effect of materials on the surface of a flat plane. These works do not employ traditional 'picturing' materials such as paint or pencil, and the imagery is often created through a use of what might appear to be the discarded materials of artisanal or construction processes.

Although relatable to picture-making, these works are deployed in ways that are not concurrent with the standard presentation of paintings or photographs. Some are freestanding, with their 'backs and sides' open to view, others lie on the floor. Furthermore, they are often draped with Jacquard tapestries and packaging harnesses, suggesting works in transit, obstacles and hoarding.

The second body of work considers 'props'. Just as the first body refers to transit and storage, here each piece employs as support structure a component resembling a domestic or industrial tool for containment or movement. Ostensibly pictorial elements are presented as time-bound material objects: the Jacquard tapestries reappear, cut, folded, draped and stacked. Sometimes they append casting cups and runners (usually discarded following the casting process); piled or wrapped-up. These works suggest a form of sculpture which is unready – which has 'faces' that are not turned towards the viewer. The sense is that these are more 'workers' than 'works' – devices for positioning and juxtaposing elements.

With these different collections Massey proposes to give us a glimpse into the 'backstage' activity of artworks, highlighting the artifice of finished works and exhibitions and drawing us closer to the collisions of accident and action that lead to creation. As in Brecht's Dialectical Theatre, artifice isn't condemned but foregrounded, encouraging the viewer away from a 'suspension of disbelief' and towards an engagement with the contradictions which abound in the space between the making and appreciation of culture.

This exhibition has come about through Limbo's Associate Members' Prize, which was awarded to Nigel Massey on the basis of his submissions selected for our inaugural Associate Members' show in 2014.

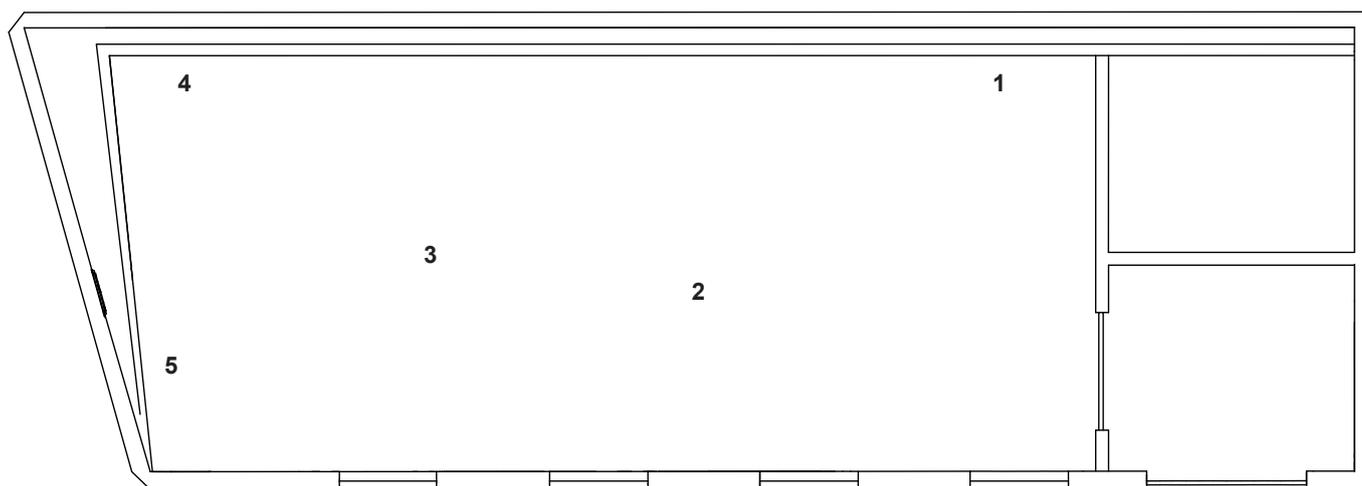
# LIMBO

Substation Project Space and Studios  
Bilton Square (off the High Street) Margate CT9 1EE  
Company Limited by Guarantee No: 04767417  
Registered in England.

+44 (0)7812 780 984  
[www.limboarts.co.uk](http://www.limboarts.co.uk)  
[info@limboarts.co.uk](mailto:info@limboarts.co.uk)



## List of works



- 1.** *Spare scenery* (2015)  
Acrylic, aluminium tape, brick samples, cast polyurethane rubber, jacquard tapestry, MDF, photographers' tape
- 2.** *Understudies* (2015)  
Acrylic, aluminium tape, chipboard, Jacquard tapestries, lavatory stall screen, MDF, paint, paper, paper tape, photographers' tape, ratchet strap, wooden bed parts
- 3.** *Cinderella* (2015)  
**Bannister, broom, cable ties, cardboard box, corduroy, delivery tube, jacquard tapestries, MDF, office screens, wood**
- 4.** *Cheap Seats* (2015)  
Cast bronze, cast polyurethane rubber, corduroy, ink, shelf
- 5.** *#7 Green Room* (2015)  
Unique lithographic print with lithograph and pigment print inserts, gilt frame

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**Nigel Massey** (lives and works in London) studied first at UWE Bristol, then at the Royal Academy Schools, London, receiving the JMW Turner Gold Medal while there. Solo exhibitions include *End of Terrace Heroics* Public House Projects, 2013; and *Hearth*, Charlie Dutton Gallery, 2012. He is soon to exhibit in *APT Creekside Open 2015*, selected by Lisa Milroy. Recent group exhibitions include *Soft tense*: Nigel Massey and Alice Browne, CONVOY, London, 2015; *FABRIC*, Collier Bristow Gallery, London, 2014; *Bad Behaviour*, Brixton East, London; 2014; *A5*, Art Athina, Athens, 2014; *LIMBO Associate Members' Show*, selected by Bob and Roberta Smith and Sarah Martin, LIMBO, 2014.

[www.nigelmassey.com](http://www.nigelmassey.com)

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