

Mercy Flatline: minusFIVE



Featuring:

- + Neil Keating
- + Phil Communication
- + John Smith
- + Nathan Jones
- + Doug Kerr

ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

03 **THIS IS THE NEWS**

04 **THIS IS NEW:** Neil Keating
Part 1 of a word>picture>word exchange

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Our tapped old magazine covers

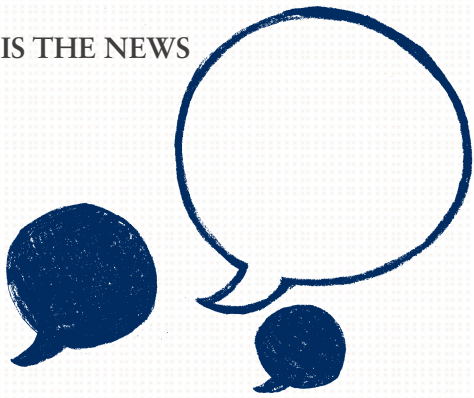
07 **THIS IS REGULAR:** My Gepetto
Fingery folkster John Smith

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From Nathan's Bluecoat residency

THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON



THIS IS THE NEWS



FIVE ALIVE ...

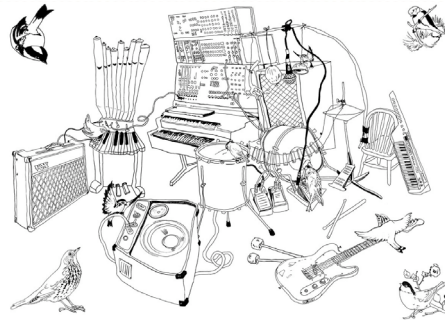
Yeeeyyyaaahhhhh, another Friday, another Flatline. We're getting used to this now. We've not even had to resort to announcing a mystery celebrity rape accusation to fill the pages yet ...

All is well at Mercy Towers; the first part of our spooky-sounding board has been put together (watch out they don't practise any black magic around you), we've got a live drawing shebang coming up in the Capital, and the first wave of Wave press releases are almost ready to release. And press.

Nathan is on holiday so let's move all the furniture and see if he notices; if you would like to contribute words or pictures to the next few issues, please send us an email, with work samples, to:

info@mercyonline.co.uk

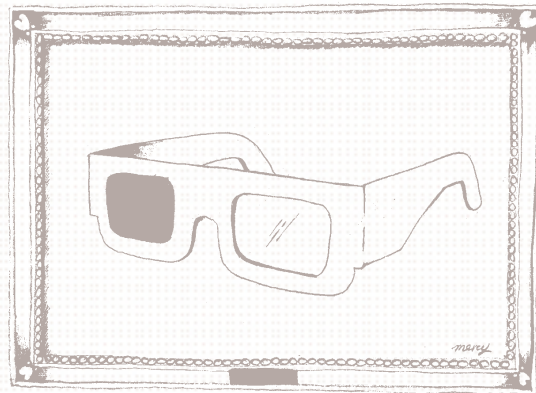
Got A Ticket To Skyride



If you're London way this weekend, then get yourself down to St James Park; we've got one of our favourite collaborators **Kathryn Cooper** there painting bikes all day, as part of the **Skyride** event.

This is the second time Kathryn has done some live drawing for us – the first being last year's Tate Liverpool art supercollider show **The Making**, where she also built us a crawl-in cathedral out of cardboard. 'Mazzzzzzzzzz.

We'll have pictures of the results next week. Here's hoping she takes a leaf out of Damien Hirst's book and stages the **mass cull** of hundreds of butterflies ...



Meet The Board



Amy Trego:

Those of you working in the arts may well be familiar with what a ballache it can be to try and put together a board.

Luckily for us though, we have super-talented friends and whizzkids in places high who we love lots. And even more luckily for us, they have agreed to be the first members of the Board of Mercy. Which isn't as Black Magic as it sounds ...

Here they are! > > >



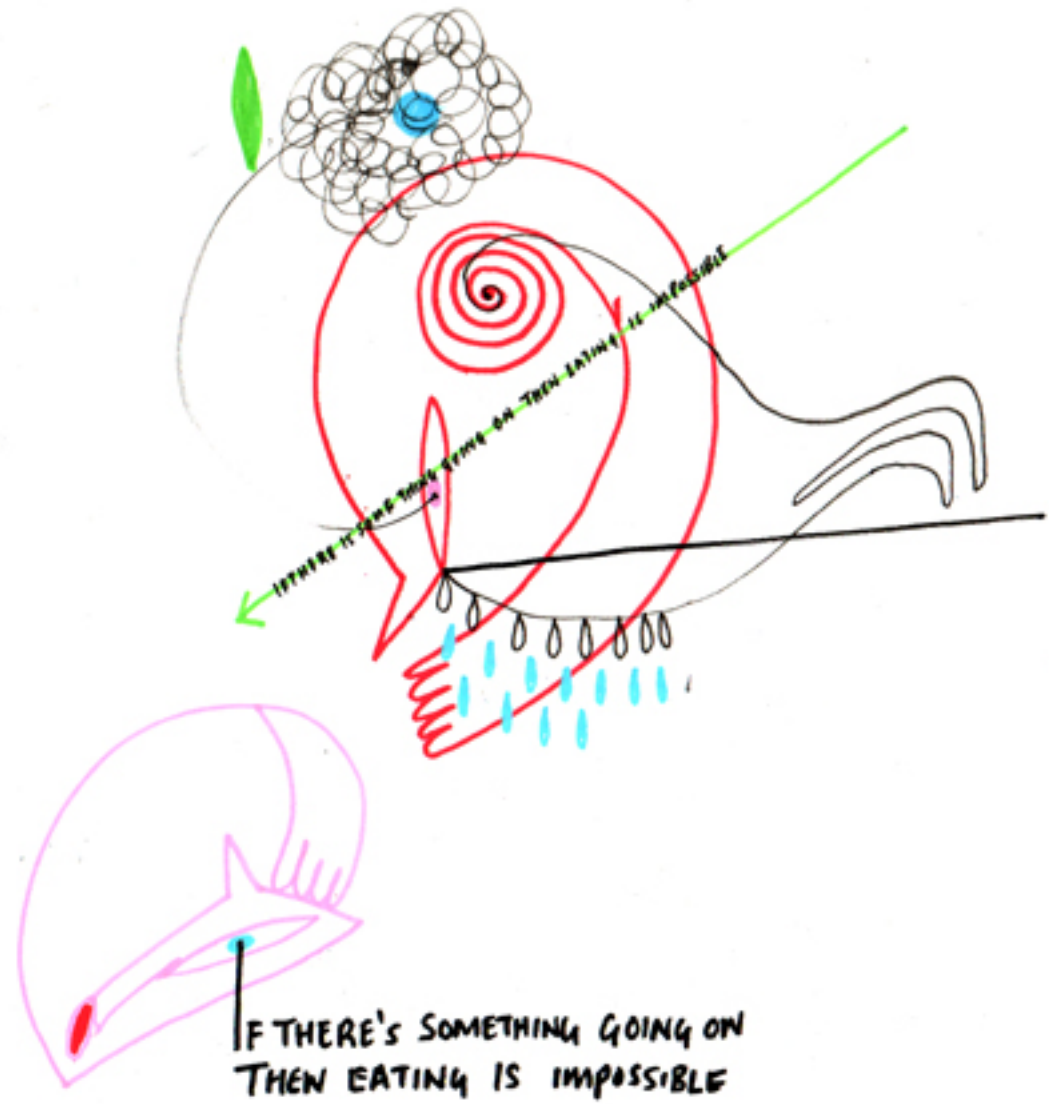
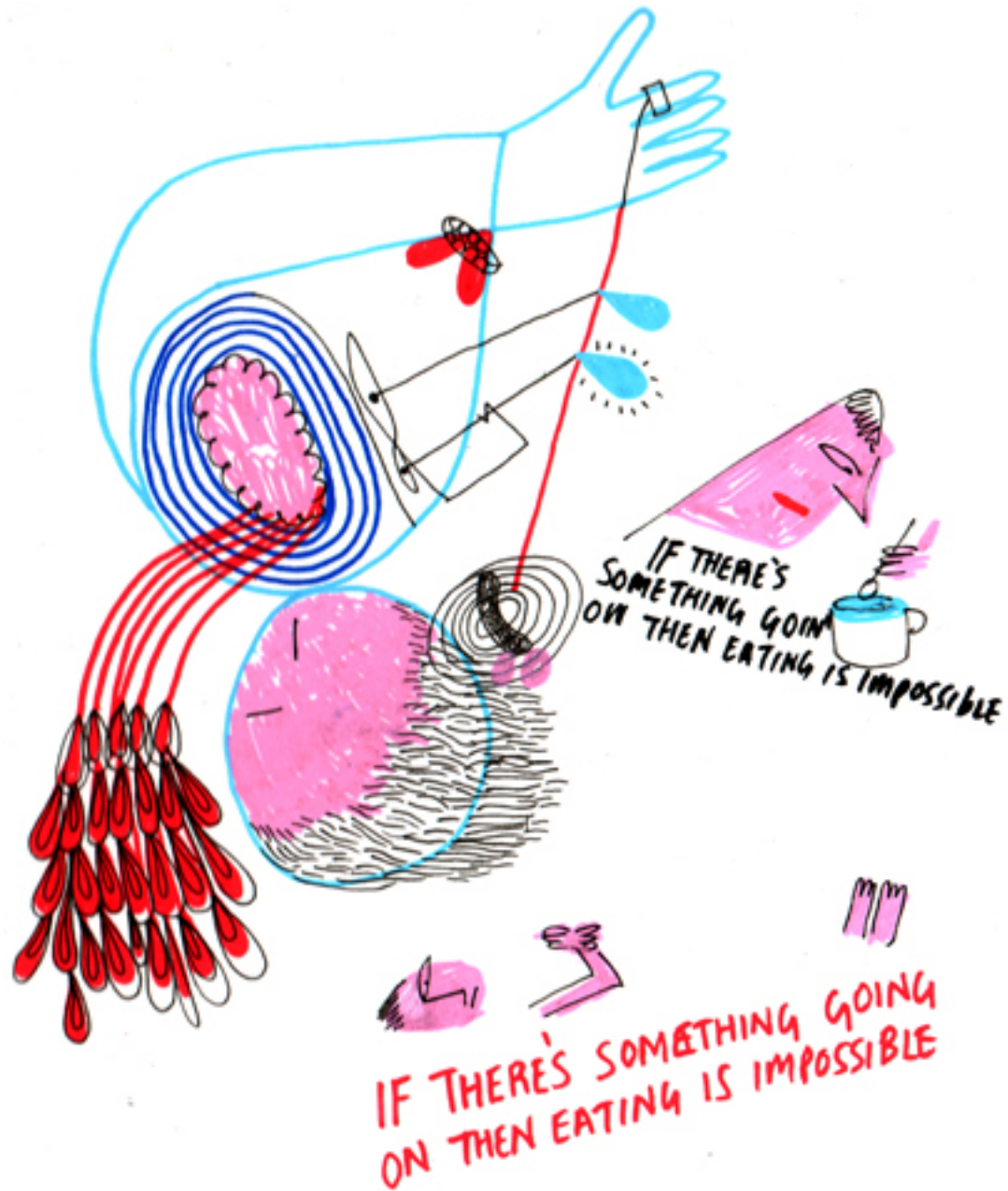
Patrick Henry:

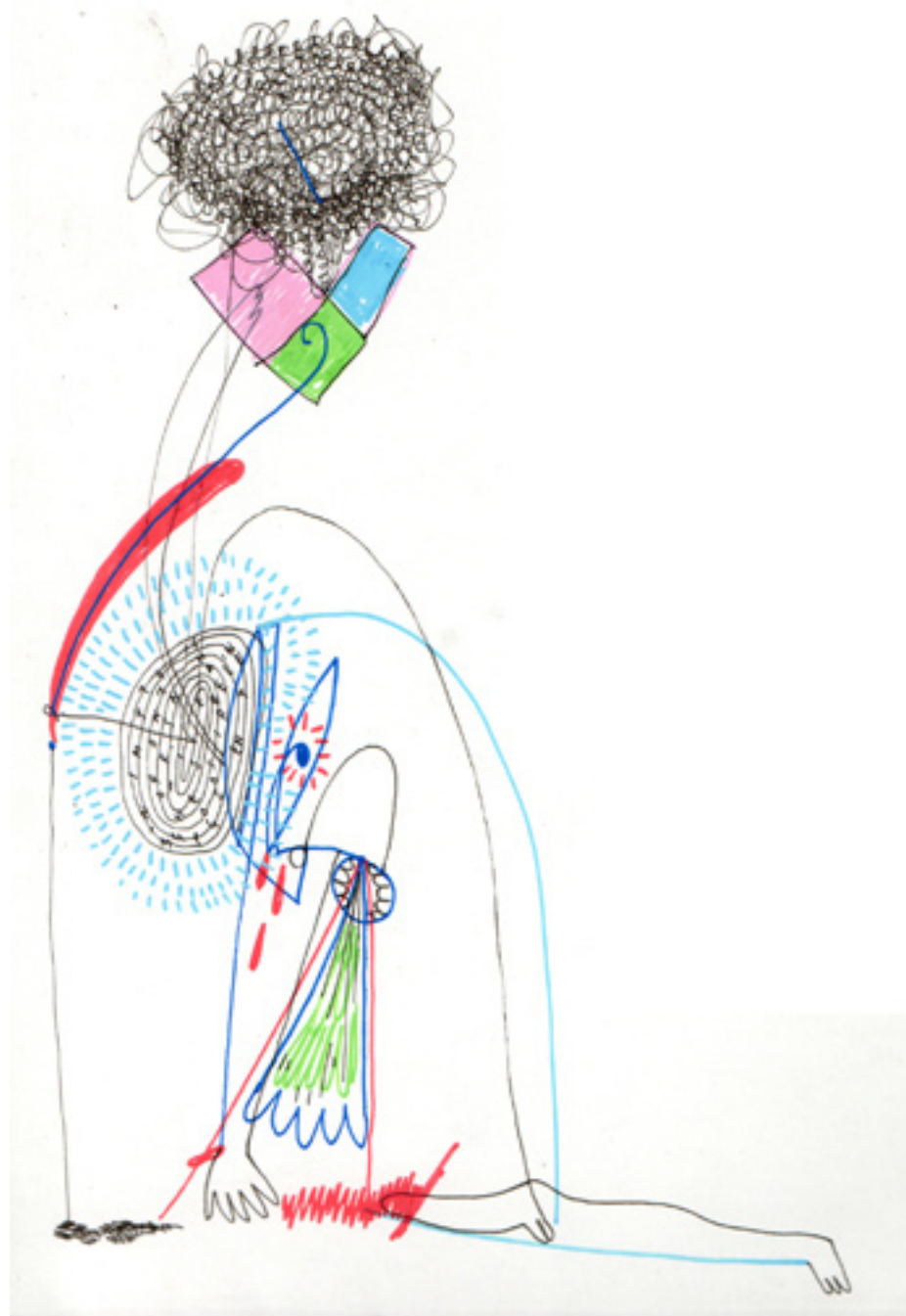
Patrick is the Chief Executive of **Open Eye Gallery**. He has been friends with Mercy from the early days, and his expertise in managing arts development will be proven this year with the opening of Open Eye Gallery's new space down at Mann Island in Liverpool.

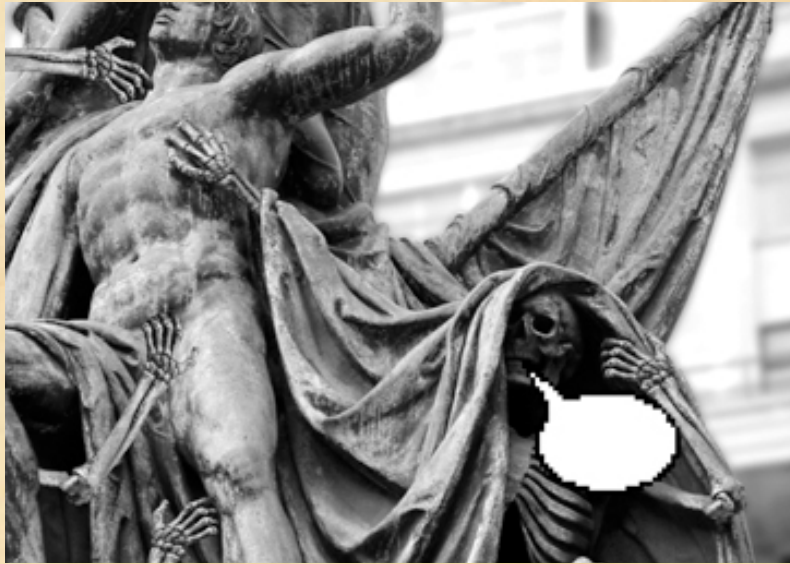
THIS IS NEW

+ Words by Nathan Jones
+ Pictures by Neil Keating

*This is the first part of a Consequences approach to poem-writing. Nathan has written a line, **Neil Keating** illustrates it, then Nathan writes the next line taking these images as his influence. More soon.*







Phil produced our mental covers during the End Days of the black and white photocopy run. We shared our first ever office above an ace pub in Liverpool that used to have a techno-laundrette in it – we very rarely got any work done thanks to the endless supply of Black Russians. Nowadays he co-directs the amazing live visuals at **Wave If You're Really There**, and is learning how to control the computers before Skynet takes over.

My Gepetto

A series of interviews exploring the influences of some of our favourite artists and clever clogses.

This week: John Smith, guitarist and songwriter whose new album

Map or Direction was released on Monday

What artist / human / thing(s) are you most influenced by?

Pink Moon, by Nick Drake

What is it about this 'thing' that you find intriguing?

It has had the biggest impact on my playing. There have been other records, but none so powerful. Pink Moon is a solo album, recorded live (save for the overdubbed piano on the title track) in two midnight sessions in the Autumn of 1971. He sat in the corner of a small studio, facing the wall, playing some of the most revolutionary guitar music ever recorded, freed of the constraints that larger band arrangements had placed on his previous output. His themes of love, loss and death are the profound meditations of a lonely and very sick man, all contained within just thirty minutes, eleven short songs.

The album is a milestone in the journey of guitar music. It showcases Drake's crazy, wonderful playing in all its glory - syncopated rhythms cascading in and out of seemingly complex chord structures. The genius of his writing was that he would only employ a handful of chords

in a song, but cast such dynamic motifs that it sounds like he is playing something extremely complicated. His daring use of rhythm exacerbates the effect no end - and has left countless guitar players scratching their heads.

If you were to pick the most important work by this person, what would it be? Why?

One of the most powerful numbers is called 'Road':

He talks about death without pomp or pretense - 'You can take the road that takes you to the stars now. I can take the road that will see me through. I can take the road that will see me through.'

The most underestimated? And why?

Pink Moon is it. The string arrangements in River Man and Way To Blue (both on Five Leaves Left, his first album) have left their mark on many people and rightly so. But I think less is more, and the sparse, tight performances on Pink Moon leave room for a mind to wander in and out of the spaces, melodically speaking. I think that his restraint on the record is

the mark of a great musician, and is all the more inviting for it. Such restraint requires a lot of balls.

By contrast, I think Bryter Layter (his second record) is over-rated. Not that it isn't beautiful - I just don't care much for the folk-rock overdubs and deliberately loud vocals. The pop sensibilities seem incongruous and unpleasant, like a stranglehold.

What work of yours most bears this influence?

New song **Hands** has a very pronounced rhythmic drive under a slow and evenly-paced vocal. The effect is that busy and relaxed things are happening at the same time, something Nick Drake used to do with such subtlety, you wouldn't even notice until you heard an album of his for the tenth time.

Listening to Drake has inspired me to explore my instrument. To try and play something different. His were statements of pure intent. I would say he was one of the greatest guitarists who ever lived.

Drake noobs could do worse than start with the wealth of the musician's material on **YouTube**. John, meanwhile, started a UK tour at London's Roundhouse, in support of David Gray, this week. Check his **MySpace** for details. He'll also be collaborating with poets Ross Sutherland and Chris Hicks at our first London Wave If You're Really There show in December, at St Leonard's Church, Shoreditch.

Slow Magic

THIS IS NEW

+ Words by Nathan Jones

+ Picture by Doug Kerr

Some Saturdays it seems all the world is troubled health and vulnerability. Men out to be rested alone, taken inside and reassured. The trees a Rorschach, breeze a humouring guide toward the linen skies.

And then these galleries seem as well a refuge from the larger, lesser refuge of the world. The paintings all they are; all they're meant to be - inside, the air of our low, deep and heavy lives crystalised through further silent rooms as further as though moving here were the movement of the blood alone - as deep rivers when they make the sea pause: and pause to play deep down.

Some sublime, destructive play, we imagine.

At some point we must let go calculations we too much hold and remain composed, attached to our thoughts like a light to stand by. Play that makes a separated palette of the senses beyond sense: indexed and put neatly somewhere beyond us. Strategies at play while mum dozes.

Fizzing, fingers mist the coatings inside of us all. Striations take the chest to grind. The difficulties of light and dark those too of the day. The heart throbs like a radio thrown on. These false feelings have a real precision, though - some event explained. As though to focus on the surface is to know all the shamelessly diluted Wednesday evenings before dusk drawn tight across the screen. Accumulations of a youth in paint.

How do we spend the novel of our adult lives, the statue of death? Sane artists surround us like the secret service. Only we are mad and at their whim. Even these approximations in the sky become sure in this sky: shingling of a cartoon world with wax, crazy to splash, a new laxity - all this a dream told like a truth, here behind the broad and silent shallows of an afternoon.

The feeling of growing line by line to fill oneself is, of course, an invention too.

As part of his poet-in-residence malarkey at The Bluecoat, Nathan wrote this poem to coincide with the *Slow Magic* exhibition. You can listen to it intently [here](#), but alas you can no longer listen to it inside the show - it closed last week. Meh, soz.

END

*To receive issue minusSIX
next week, make sure your
email address is on our **list***