



# ELEPHANT

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# EXCLUDE NOTHING, SAY NOTHING

Richard Brereton asks "*questions*"  
and Chris Tomic delivers "*answers*"

**Left: 'Nil'**  
Paint on wood,  
186 x 188mm

**Below: 'Hell Yes'**  
Paint on wood  
203 x 225mm



*Richard Brereton: Tell us a little about your background?*

Chris Tosic: I come from Edinburgh and am now living and working in London. I studied fine art at the Slade School of Fine Art, then typography at the London College of Communication (in 2005). I had managed to acquire a lot of typographic knowledge after leaving the Fine Art course at the Slade. I didn't actually gain a great deal while at LCC.

*What prompted you to study typographic design?*

Within my work the progression from

painting to typography was slow, but it seemed to be a response to form and content. I felt that typography started to have more relevance as a way of developing ideas.

*How would you describe your relationship with text, art and design?*

I think that art and design are straightforward in the sense that 'art is art' and 'design is design'. I don't think things have innate meaning – this only becomes apparent through context.

I'm a strong believer in 'context creates meaning', 'meaning is use' and 'use is context'. I don't think text on its own

is a discipline; typography, as in the context of image and word layout, is a discipline and I feel the same way to this as I do to art and design.

*How do you apply humour to your work?*

I don't think I try to apply humour directly. If humour happens, it's a by-product rather than intentional. There is a piece of work called 'NATURE, YOU ROCK' and this came out of some thoughts I had about Spinoza, but it wasn't meant to be humorous. I guess it was just a language thing.

*Do you have a method for composing words?*

'I'm Too Sad To Tell You'  
(after Bas Jan Ader)  
Paint on wood,  
841 x 1189mm



I don't have a specific process that I can describe for composing words. It's usually some kind of balance between form and content, but it also has a lot to do with tautological thoughts and ideas. The expression 'exclude nothing, say nothing' captures the moment I'm aiming for within the work, whether it be linguistic, or pictorial. Banality as an idea has also been an important framework, but what that really means is hard to define.

*Do you keep a sketchbook?*

I do keep a sketchbook and it has, among other things, expressions that I gather when something catches my eye.

*Do you have particular places where you seek inspiration from – e.g. books, newspapers, radio, film, television, conversations?*

I don't have any specific place where I seek inspiration. I look at all the above mediums, but more often that not it's

the anomalies in the system that are more interesting, the slip of the tongue, or the clumsy action, which exposes the cracks where a kind of truth or ideology reveals itself.

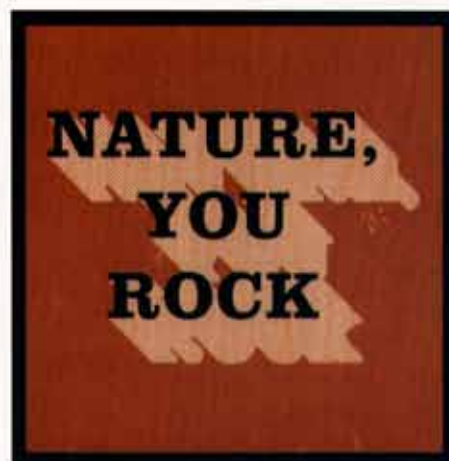
*Do you ever use quotes?*

Generally no, but there is a small series I have been experimenting with where I have been lifting sentences straight from existing texts. These sentences seem to have no residue from their original context and are open enough so they somehow point towards other ideas. There is no point in referencing the original text, it will not make the work more meaningful.

*When drafting words, how do you decide when the words are right?*

There isn't any fixed production process with regards to the text. I try to think about the idea that the limits of language are the limits of reality. A tautology says nothing useful about the world, it simply

'Nature, You Rock'  
Paint on wood,  
213 x 213mm



describes all possible states; I feel there is a kind of truthfulness in this. So the more a text describes the world, the less it succeeds in representing it. Ultimately, there is a kind of autonomous 'aura', or atmosphere around the work which marks its conclusion.

*Do you seek the opinions of others?*

I would rather call it a discourse around the work, but, yes, all the time. Without this dialogue, it would rapidly descend into a meaningless 'private language', which is a contradiction in terms. To be in a culture is the only way to make work, anything outside of this is just doodling.

*How long does your work take to 'incubate'?*

Most of the text or image pieces happen in themselves fairly quickly, but it usually takes between 18-24 months before I release work from the studio.

*Do you have an aim of where you would like to show?*

'Minimal Artistic Input'  
Paint on wood,  
186 x 259mm



The work has been made in a Fine Art context, so that is how I would prefer the work to engage with culture. Beyond this, I don't see what I can do to stop images being re-used, or quoted within other cultural models. I'm personally not making the work for possible book covers or record sleeves, but if someone wants to use them in that way that's their decision not mine.

*Do you have an aim of what you would like to say?*

If the work doesn't question the nature of the subject I don't think it's fully engaging with culture. I think Fine Art's reflexive nature defines it as a fundamental activity, unlike Illustration or Graphic Design, which, more often than that not, has a) been commissioned and b) a specific communication objective. The limits of language define the limits of reality, this is where I try to push the work.

*Do you view your work as political?*

The "Art Zero" idea is a myth. All art is political. I would say that it's impossible to construct work without revealing some kind of political position. It's important to understand that a visual aesthetic is usually a response to your own experience of culture. If I feel that I live in a "mechanized society [...] of alienated labour, banal advertisements and a vulgarizing mass media" I will make work in a particular way. Other experiences of the world reflect different aesthetic qualities. This said, I feel that I try to make 'art about art', not 'art about politics, nature, philosophy, ethics, etc.'

*Who buys your work?*

I don't have a 'private income' and therefore survive economically by doing graphic design teaching and studio-assistant work. Within a capitalist society I feel commodification is riddled

with contradiction and usually compromises the work at every level. However, I don't exist in a cultural vacuum and navigating the ups and downs of this system is all part of the work. If I can sell work to generate time to continue making work, then this is a worthwhile position. It would be great if all the people who bought into my work felt this way, but this isn't always the case. I'm trying to make work that engages within the fine art context of our culture. So I would hope that the people who buy my work read it within this context. However, if people buy the work for other reasons I just have to believe the work is open enough to exist within those contexts. I don't give the work meaning, culture will ultimately determine its true value ●

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