

TANK

Radical fashions: Juliana Huxtable and Stewart Uoo

Hamish Morrow reviews Juliana Huxtable's new show at Project Native Informant and the first London iteration of Stewart Uoo's annual showcase It's Get Better at the ICA

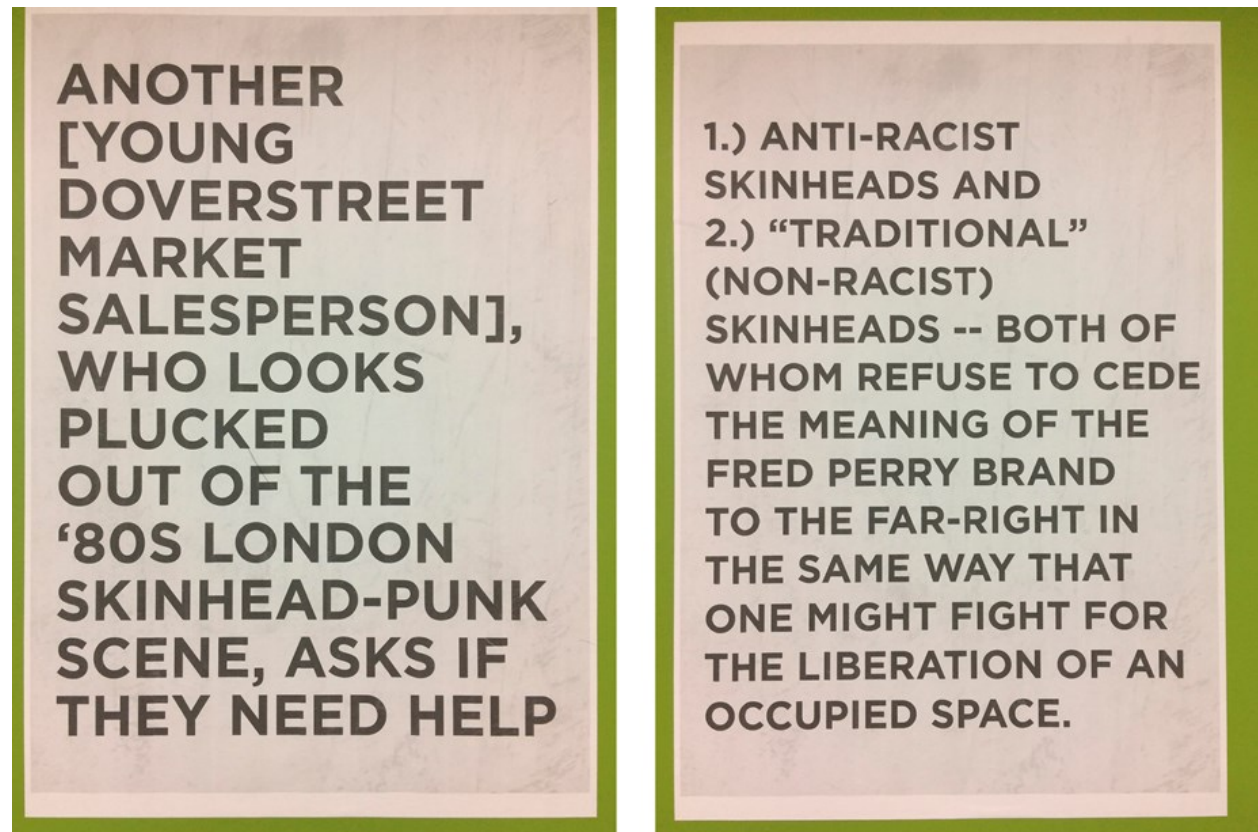
September, 2017



Left, Juliana Huxtable, *TBT*, 2017. All images courtesy Julia Huxtable and Project Native Informant, London. Right, Juliana Huxtable, *TBT*, 2017.

Last week, Juliana Huxtable opened her first solo show outside of the US at London's Project Native Informant. The mercurial artist, musician and performer presented an articulate meditation on the signifying power of military surplus clothing and skinhead fashion. In Huxtable's exhibition clothing itself is something to be "occupied", as one might a political space. Using the slogans "Corporal Anarchy", "Anti-alternative FASHION" and "Swastikafetish", the show addresses and reconstitutes fashion staples such as the MA-1 flight jacket, Fred Perry polo shirts and Ben Sherman. These are examples of clothing worn equally by followers of fashion, anti-racist skinheads or supporters of the far-right, to represent very different, identities, political intentions and allegiances, if any at all. Huxtable understands what it means to be in a constant state of becoming, where every gesture is a perpetual vanishing point, needing to be repeated endlessly. In such a state of flux, clothing operates as a powerful interface of

communication between the world and the body of the wearer. Her refiguring of these iconic pieces gives us pause to consider the complex and contradictory meanings that emerge when we all wear the same clothes.



Right, Juliana Huxtable, *TBT*, 2017. Left, Juliana Huxtable, *TBT*, 2017.

As well as launching her own show, Huxtable collaborated on Stewart Uoo's *It's Get Better* at the ICA. This was the fifth iteration of the event and the first to occur in London – the others all took place in New York. The night featured performances from musicians, artist and poets, including Huxtable. Punctuating the performances were films by the likes of Ryan Trecartin, Trevor Shimizu, Joyce NG and Klein, among others, which served as an enthralling visual accompaniment to the main proceedings. Part exhibition and part all-night show, moments of glamour merged with an atmosphere of exuberance. Raúl de Nieves delivered a performance possessed of a visceral energy that rocked from the underworld. Bridging shamanistic practice with the ravings of the demon from the iconic film *The Exorcist* (1973), the performance left the audience shivering with intensity.

The legendary Just Doshá preened her way through a bearded performance that was part studied disinterest, part effortless glamour: a total embodiment of sprezzatura. Doshá's rapid-fire lyrics articulated a life lived within the fluid spectrum beyond the gender binary. Lines like "Steady Dick" and "9 or 11" were emitted in an intense and mesmerising pop-rap flow.

With the various ICA spaces in a state of undress as part of the ongoing building works programme, and Juliana Huxtable's show still fresh in my mind, the young fashionable crowd seemed to "occupy" an a political space of narcissistic consumer display. The exception was the extravagant Susanne Oberbeck (also known as No Bra) – resplendent in thigh-high white platform boots, indigo jockstrap and neon orange, sheer, opera gloves – who delivered a seasoned performance in her deadpan monotone. The event formed part of incoming director Stefan Kalmár's programme to reinvigorate the ICA and restore it to its rightful place as a space for the radical and subversive. *It's Get Better* proved a fitting exemplar of this direction – it was a contingent coming together where new possibilities might emerge. The evening's sticky, web-like entanglements of affective communication between Uoo, his collaborators and the audience offered a promising glimpse of a much-anticipated return to form for the institution. §