



**'Freedom of Speech'**

Street Demonstrators Placard

The piece references the underestimated power of social media to spread and manipulate information, and provokes thought on how technology enables the new 'freedom of speech'. Internet space is where reality and fantasy can co-exist, fuse together and morph into an indistinguishable version of the real world. The wildcat phenomena of social networking moves fast through uncharted territory with previously unmatched potential to disseminate controlled and manipulated ideas and views, creating an illusion of reality that can spill into the real world with sometimes catastrophic social consequences. With the opportunity for multiple personas and fantasies the impact on personal identity, shared values and social groupings is profound. In the light of the recent riots in England, this message is uncannily resonant.

More recently, my practice researches the psychological influence mobile phone text messages can have on romantic relationships to create an altered perception of reality. This form of invasive, commitment free communication has the power to reach deep into our psyche where it fuels passion and fantasy, feeds on our deepest unconscious needs, preys upon vulnerability and reveals multiple facets of our personality that make up our whole self. Secrecy, exhilaration or guilt can grow to become addictive and obsessive, and when this combines with conditional love and lack of commitment it can become abusive, corrupting and destabilising our human drive for love, security and acceptance. Our natural need for a secure world becomes distorted into a confused place where fantasy, illusion and human need dangerously merge and can leave us vulnerable and emotionally tangled.