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Honda Dream Factory
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Kevin Harman admits that when he started art college he was pretty naive. He had been studying graphic design, but then one day thought that he "was only going for graphic design so I could get some money and a job. And that seemed like a pretty lame motivation to control the rest of my life. So I thought to hell with it, I'll have a go at fine art, and prepare to be skint for the rest of my life."

Art college was a shock. "Nobody in my family had ever been to further education – not just my parents but my uncles and aunts too. Finally my brother went off to art college and then I followed. But when I got there, I struggled with what exactly I was supposed to be doing. The first two years I had no idea. I was making things that were aesthetically pleasing: sculpture, wall works; it looked like art and I was good at drawing and form making."

Finally he took a step back and had a proper look at his work. "Art college breaks you down and then starts you right from the beginning, it changes the way you look at things, lets you see how art can exist anywhere in anything. I looked at my work and thought, 'what am I doing? Am I trying to do something for me, or for other people?'"

"I started hanging around the worksite where another brother of mine was working as a joiner, and I was thinking how beautiful and uncelebrated the work he was doing was." From that moment sprung the first piece of work that Harman would be happy with. "I went into a worksite in the middle of the night and took one of the buckets from the diggers. It weighed a tonne, and I had to drag it down the street and then get a friend to help me get it to the studio. And I collected knives from charity shops all over Edinburgh, and then I shoved them – dozens of them - into the bucket until they stuck out like the spines of an anemone. And that was it."

His work since has continued to play with unusual materials – often from construction sites – and with the fine line between legality or acceptability, and illegality and the offensive. "I think that line, some people believe that you can only be on one side of it or the other", he says. "But I like flirting with it, it's exciting to put people into a quandary. That line can actually shift depending on how you look at it." One of his best known works, for example, involved putting a scaffolding pole through the window of an Edinburgh art gallery; Harman had sent the gallery in question a polite legal letter telling them that they had been "selected for my eagerly awaited 2009 winter project Brick. I sort of reversed the roles, I became the selector and they became the selectee."

On the given day, Harman turned up and put the pole through the window, as he had promised. A glazier then arrived and repaired the window. The gallery, however, refused to see any artistic merit in the project, and called the police. Harman ended up paying a £200 fine, on top of the glazier's fee. But for him the project was successful on every level; the gallery were exposed in their narrow views of what makes an artistic event, and what doesn't. "I was inducing their self-destruction. They made the choice to prosecute, and that exposed them completely. I neutered their control and authority." Subsequent work, all with the same Puck-ish sense of mischief, includes visiting skips in the dead of night, and rearranging the contents into beautiful, symmetrical piles ("I go back in the morning to watch the workmen coming back, just so that I can see their faces. I don't film them, no; it's not about making spectacles of them"), or tearing the last page out of the crime novels on sale in charity shops around Edinburgh and replacing them with a note reading; The final page of this crime novel has been taken to be part of an exhibition at ...location..... on the ... date..... Best cheers, Kevin Harman". The captured pages were bound together and displayed in Bethnal Green library last year.

After Dream Factory sought him out a couple of years ago, Harman was one of the exhibitors in their Brick Lane show this summer. "It's been interesting meeting some of these other cool folk," he says. "Some of them are really quite inspiring; it's been great to get to know them." The mischief, no doubt, will continue.