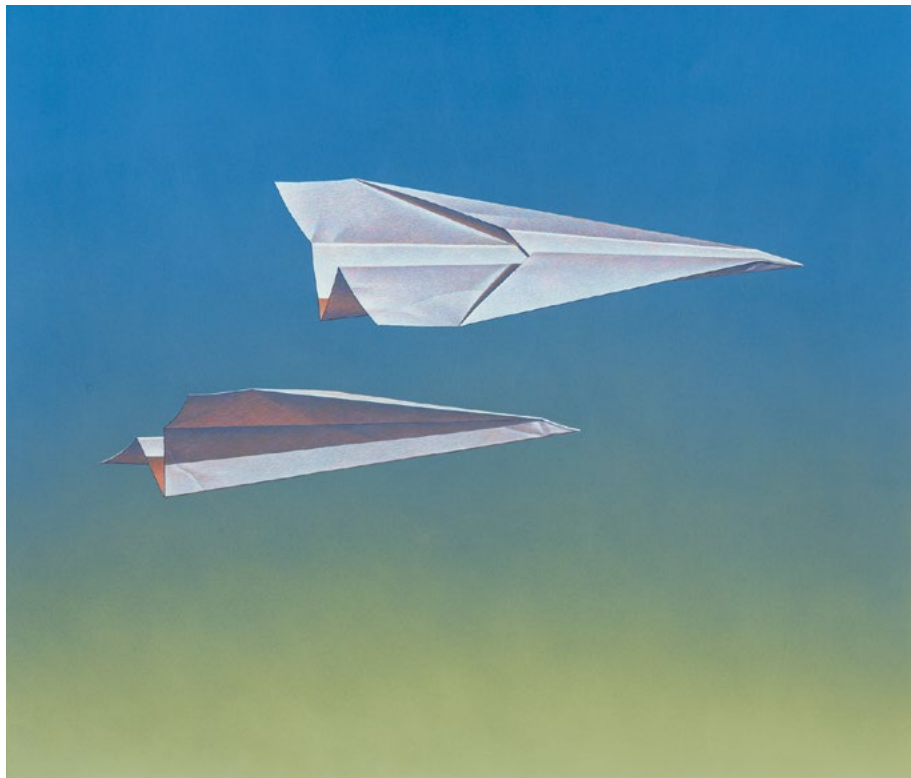


ROBERT CLINCH

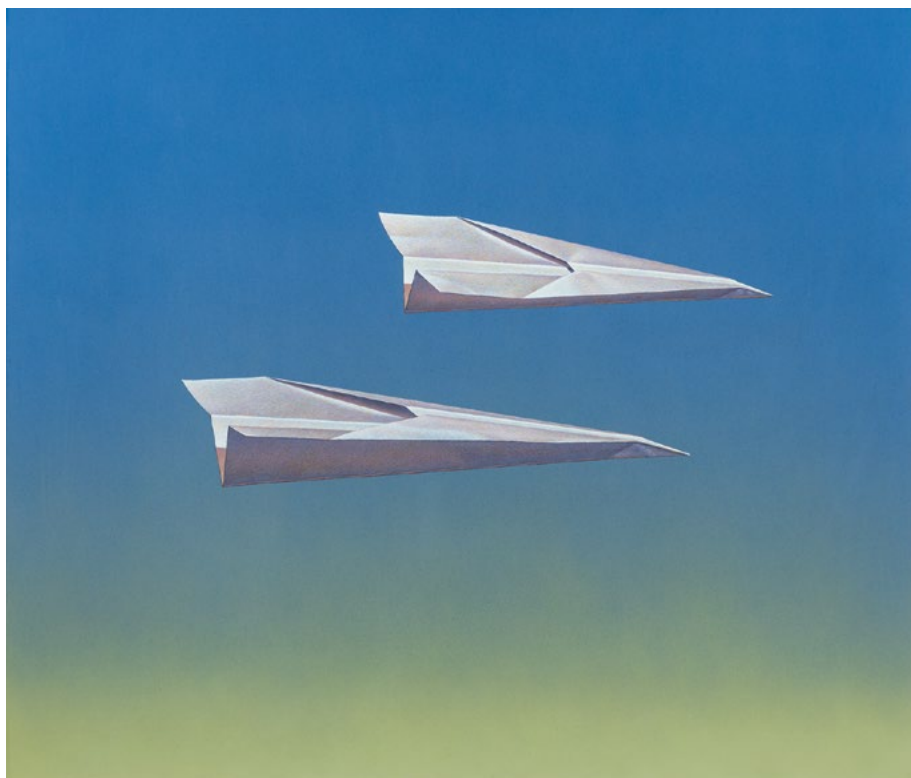
THE GOGGOMOBIL D'ART PROJECT

SATURDAY 25 MARCH - SATURDAY 6 MAY 2017

LAURINE · DIGGINS · FINE · ART



ROBERT CLINCH 1957 -
Kindred, 2016
autopaint and two-pack on etch-primed aluminium
45 cm x 52 cm



ROBERT CLINCH 1957 -
Match-Race, 2016
autopaint and two-pack on etch-primed aluminium
45 cm x 52 cm

ROBERT CLINCH: Objet



Some time ago Robert Clinch first suggested to art collector and car enthusiast Jeff Brown that it would be 'fun' to paint the Goggomobil car. Jeff consequently bought one for that very purpose. However, neither could have imagined the intensive labour, time and plethora of aesthetic and technical challenges that would be involved to convert idea into reality. Now, some 12 months after the project started, we witness the gestation, maturation and birth of the new and improved Goggomobil 'D'art'.

The Goggomobil Dart is a unique story that provides a fascinating insight into the changing fashions and tastes in the modern automobile industry and its impact both in Australia and upon the world stage. Goggomobil began life in post World War II Bavaria as air-cooled, two-stroke, two-cylinder micro-cars. The two-door sedan and a sportier coupe released in 1957 extended the range, but essentially the car remained a relatively inexpensive workhorse with a spartan interior and basic shape.

Franchised to the US and Australia, the Goggomobil underwent a complete overhaul. In the Sydney workshop of the legendary car designer and retailer Bill Buckle, the Goggomobil became the quintessential Dart, an even smaller, streamlined package that for Buckle signified 'taking flight'. Between 1959 and 1961, when production stopped, close to 700 units rolled off the line in Australia and were eagerly snapped up.

Bill Buckle's design innovations meant that the Goggomobil Dart was not only faster, it looked the part. The replacement of the steel body with lightweight moulded fibreglass, the elimination of doors and the introduction of bright new colour schemes contributed to its overall performance and appearance. Its main competitor, the British-produced Sunbeam Alpine, meant Australia was well-served by fun little sports cars that reflected the values of both younger men and the independent, fashionable women about town.

The sense of the Dart as a beautiful object in its own right - economical, sleek, taut and minimalist in design - inspired Robert Clinch to produce, quite literally, this *objet d'art*. By superimposing a squadron of his signature paper plane darts on the car he achieves a sense of speed, grace and movement, importantly 'even when it's standing still'.

Robert Clinch is an artist whose work requires space and time. In past centuries, artists were often commissioned by the leading families of the day. In Jeff Brown, Clinch also found an enthusiastic and like-minded supporter for the Goggomobil project.

First a workshop was needed to accommodate the car. The Goggomobil was driven in, stripped and elevated; to become a workable, blank canvas. A protracted period of research and development had preceded this, which for Clinch was an essential part of the transformation of the Dart to 'D'art'. Using 60% scaled working mechanical drawings and

model paper darts suspended before the car like dancing marionettes, Clinch calculated the number required, the proportions and how the darts could be successfully adapted and integrated into the car's form.

In modern car design wind tunnels are used to simulate the aerodynamic dimensions of a vehicle, whereas the car designers of the 1950s and '60s relied more on their own aesthetic judgement. Clinch's extensive process was similar in outcome if not method. Size, proportion, density and number were determined by eye, with the experimentation continually re-aligning with his desired aesthetic of movement and flight.



KARL VON MOLLER (filmmaker)
D'art Project in progress, 2016

"I have a problem with my Goggomobil..... Goggomobil.....g-o-gg-o"

- *Yellow Pages advert 1992-1999*

The detailed drawings and test plates produced as part of the project are important elements. These show Clinch's commitment to the process and the layering of his ideas. Significantly they are strong and independent works in their own right. The drawings, in particular, will be familiar to followers of Clinch's career. Painstakingly rendered using chalk and conté pencils on coloured paper, these are reminiscent of the work of old European masters and the drawings they produced in their studios that formed the basis for usually larger commissioned works. These drawings are now as coveted as the original in situ paintings and sculptures.

The painted panels show Clinch's love of Renaissance art; specifically, his interest in the muted pastel colours of Sandro Botticelli and the precise line and crystalline forms of Piero della Francesca. Moving from the egg tempera, he similarly favours, to enamel paint and thinners, Clinch had to rethink the use of traditional brushes and his usual painting techniques and experiment with new ways of colour mixing and application.

The time-consuming task of transferring the

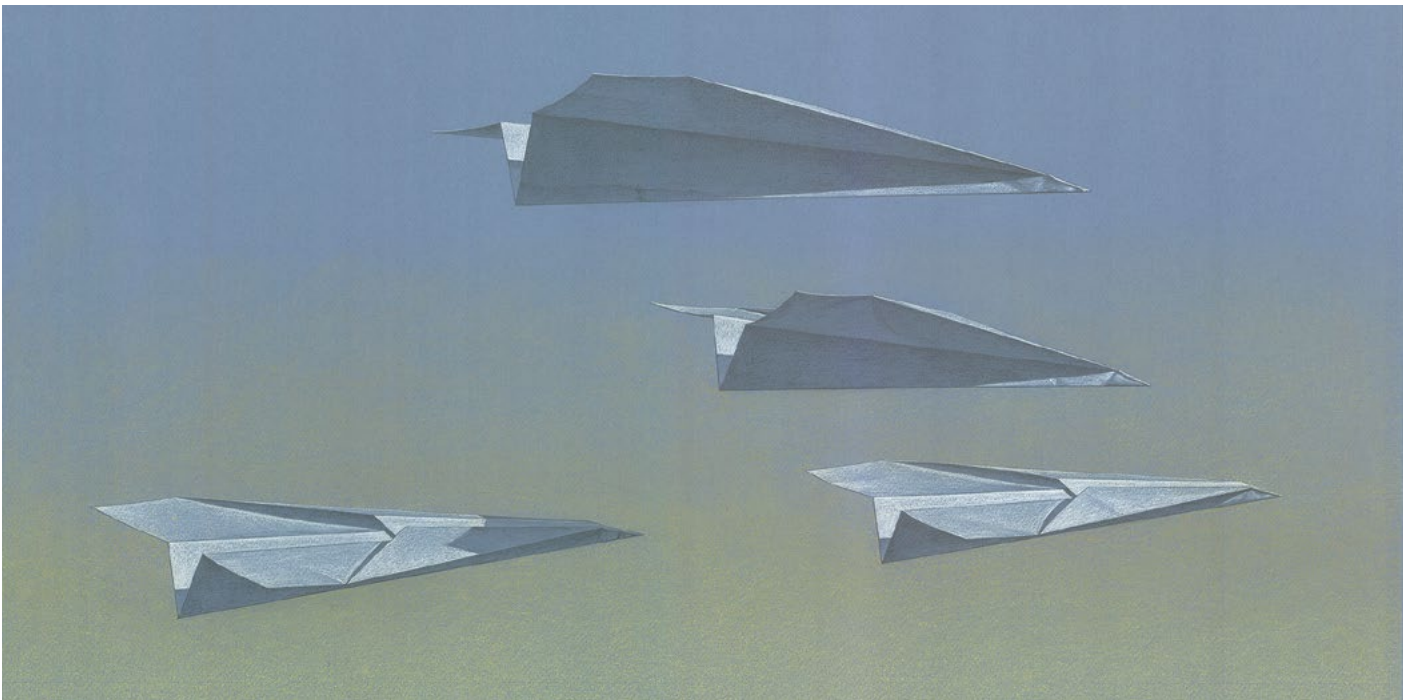
images one by one to the body of the car was both mentally and physically taxing. Clinch did not start painting until the middle of September 2016 and finally completed it in February 2017. The difficulty of the work was exacerbated by the external configuration of the car. Although it had been stripped of ornament and badges and by nature was bereft of joins and seams, the curving forms, lifts and tucks of the Dart presented a challenge. In some places, Clinch had to paint in a reversal of his normal practice to achieve the desired effect.

Art cars are an important part of the cultural landscape of the 20th (and 21st) centuries. As a reformed 'petrol-head' and someone learned in modern art and design, Clinch is aware of the various incantations of the art car that have graced Australia and international stands. These include the legendary 1970s Sandman panel van that featured the ubiquitous endless wave spray-painted on burnt orange or lime green. Far removed from these, BMW launched its first art car in 1975. Initiated by the French racecar driver Hervé Poulain, the BMW art car has played host to major artists including Alexander Calder, Andy Warhol, Jenny Holzer and Australian indigenous artist Michael Nelson Jagamara.

Robert Clinch has expressed an appreciation of the Jeff Koons car that was launched in 2010. Koons's brightly coloured work screams power, motion and bursting energy prompting him to declare: 'You can participate with it, add to it and let yourself transcend with its energy. There is a lot of power under that hood and I want to let my ideas transcend with the car - it's really to connect with that power.'⁽¹⁾

While the Goggomobil makes no claim on such raw power or sheer explosive energy the idea of working with the vehicle and making it feel perpetually in transit or flight is an ethos both artists share. The synchronicity of the Dart name with Goggomobil and Robert Clinch's art is also what distinguishes this project. The paper dart is a motif that carries wide-ranging autobiographical associations and meanings for Clinch. He first started using the paper dart motif in a suite of paintings entitled *Flights of Fancy* (1985) recalling how darts in flight became a surrogate for the imagination of the child who threw them.⁽²⁾ The motif persisted, signifying imagination, transience, purity and fragility. In some well-known paintings they express the isolation of working as an artist or Clinch's views on the state of the environment.

Sea-Gulls, 2000, is a tempera painting that comes closest to the Goggomobil D'art project. Darts float, hover and land subject to the vagaries of a coastal breeze. What looks to be seemingly natural has been carefully orchestrated into a formal vocabulary of deftly observed and delicately rendered and arranged shapes. More recent installations such as *Suspension of Disbelief* at Art Gallery of Ballarat and *Returning* at Manningham Gallery, Melbourne, have extended the repertoire to focus on the synchronic movement of darts



ROBERT CLINCH 1957 -

Tag-Teams, 2016
graphite, chalk and conté pencils on blue paper
39 cm x 73 cm

“Here we have flight in the (paper) darts coming together on a car, which is a dart”

- Robert Clinch

through architectural space. In the former, Clinch propelled visitors toward the exhibition space while in the latter he proposes a visual metaphor for a swarm or flock of darts focused on collective return. In each case, Clinch uses the darts to personify traits such as love, togetherness and harmony or conversely discord and disorder. Combine a vintage car collector, an iconic car and an accomplished realist artist equally passionate about clean lines and gutsy performance and you have the makings of a perfect match. Robert Clinch’s ‘D’art’ heralds a new and exciting chapter in car art. Most important of all, seeing the car for the first time literally takes your breath away. Curvy, sumptuous and precise this is a Goggomobil ‘D’art’ for the ages. It conveys unbridled joy and a palpable sense of artistic freedom.

Rodney James, curator and writer.

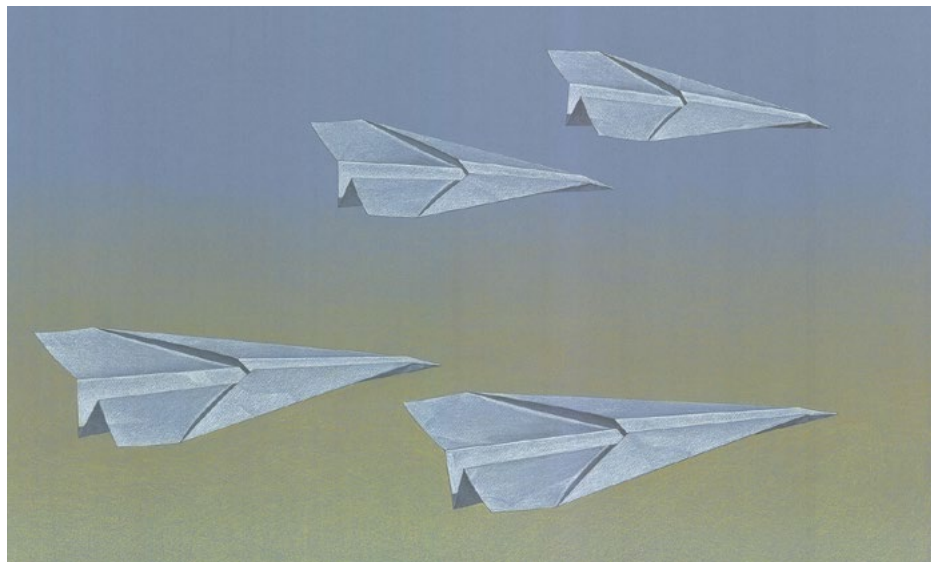
Notes

¹ Jeff Koons, www.artcar.bmwgroup.com

² Robert Clinch in conversation with Julie Collett, in *Robert Clinch: Fanfare for the common man*, Art Gallery of Ballarat, 2013, pp.91-97.

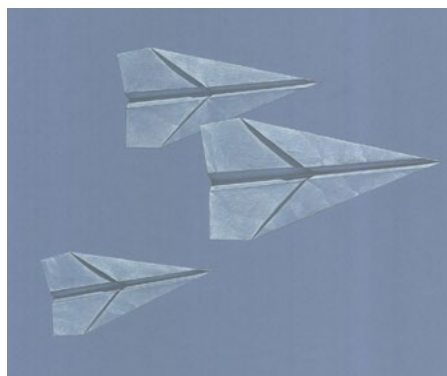
The author wishes to thank Robert Clinch for his assistance with this essay and for allowing a ‘sneak peek’.

The Goggomobil D’art Project is the subject of a documentary film by Karl von Moller.



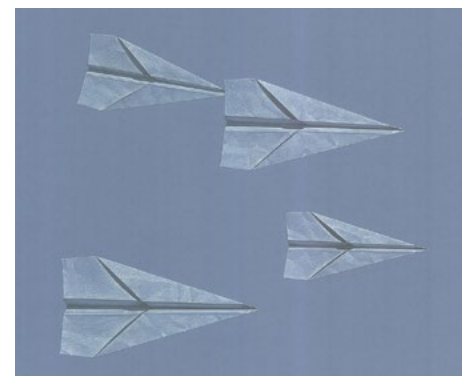
ROBERT CLINCH 1957 -

Harmony, 2016
graphite, chalk and conté pencils on blue paper
44 cm x 73 cm



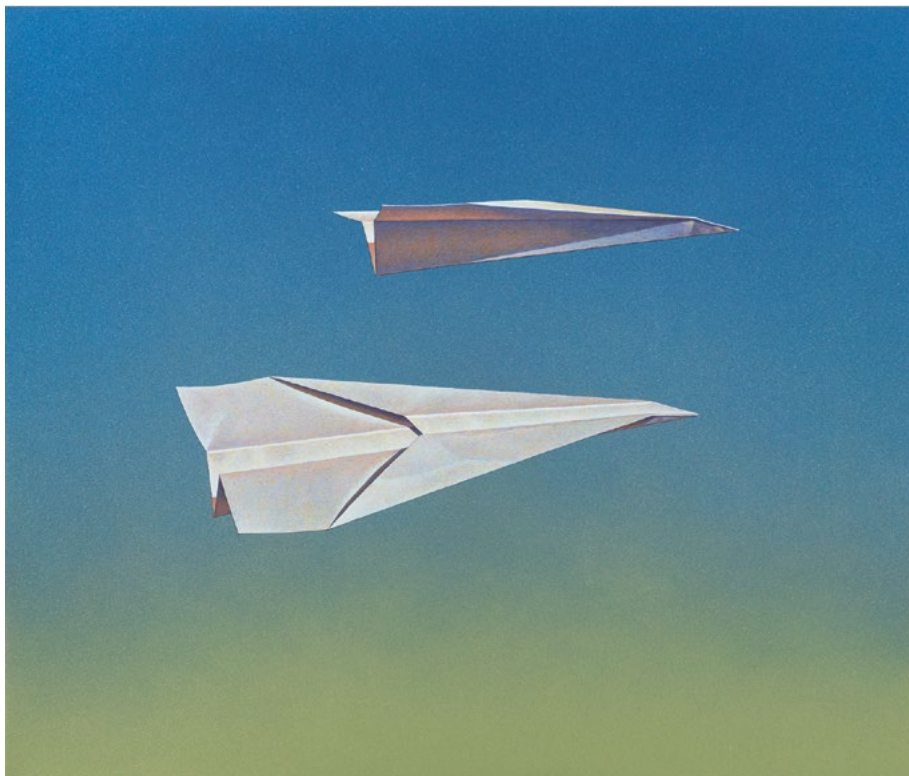
ROBERT CLINCH 1957 -

Father, 2016
graphite and chalk pencils on blue paper
44 cm x 59 cm

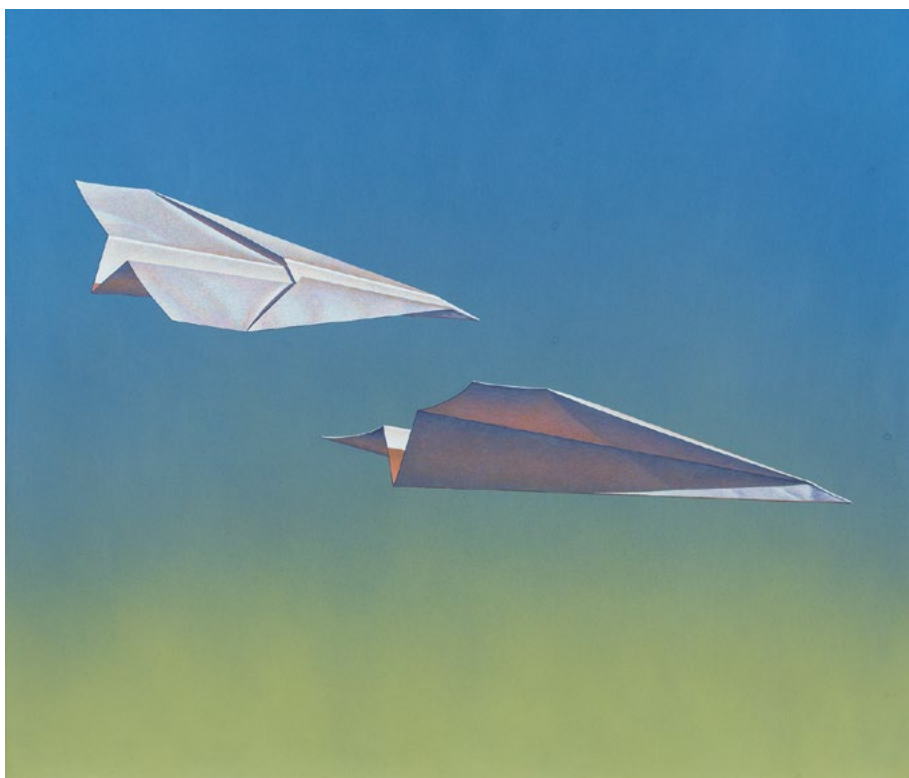


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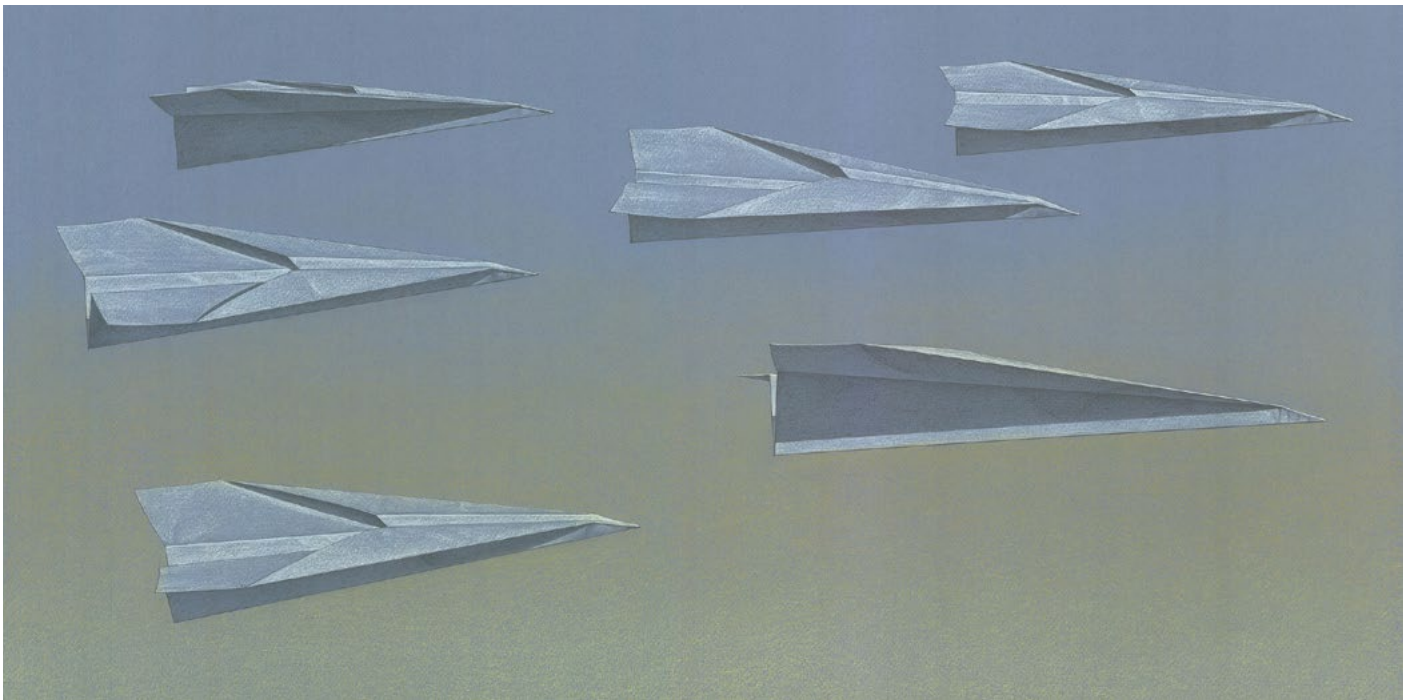
Quartet, 2016
graphite and chalk pencils on blue paper
53 cm x 73 cm



ROBERT CLINCH 1957 -
Wingman, 2016
autopaint and two-pack on etch-primed steel
45 cm x 52 cm



ROBERT CLINCH 1957 -
Flirts, 2016
autopaint and two-pack on etch-primed aluminium
45 cm x 52 cm



ROBERT CLINCH 1957 -

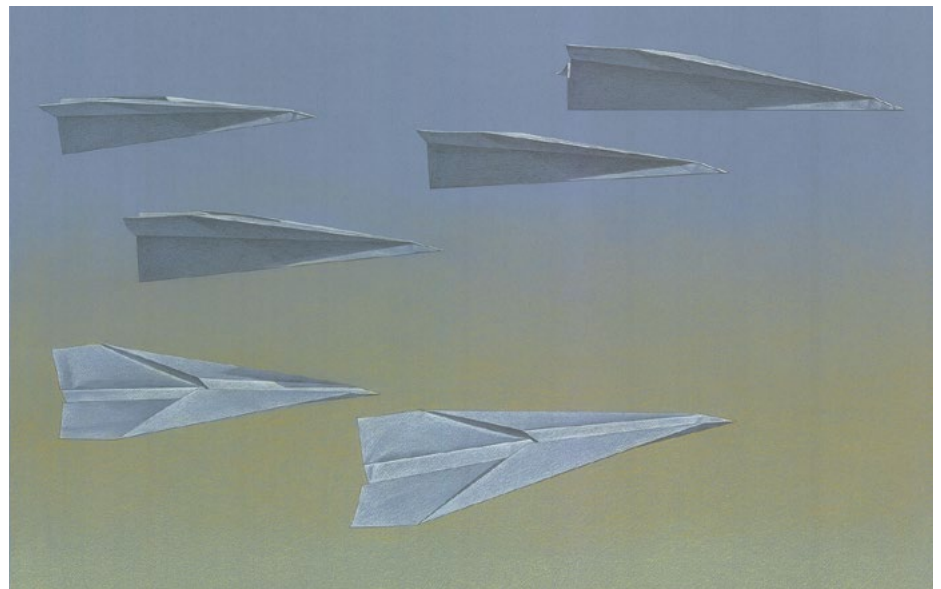
Traffic, 2016
 graphite, chalk and conté pencils
 on blue paper
 39 cm x 73 cm



KARL VON MOLLER (filmmaker)
D'art Project in progress, 2016

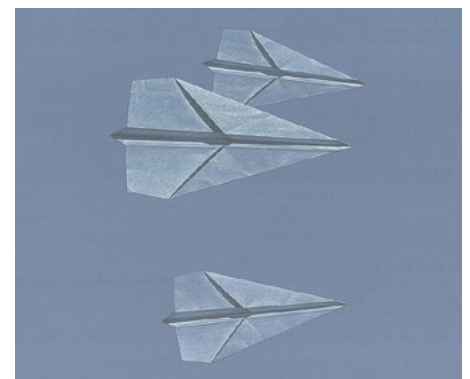
COVER
KARL VON MOLLER (filmmaker)
D'art Project in progress, 2016

Photography: Mark Ashkanasy



ROBERT CLINCH 1957 -

Valkyrie, 2016
 graphite, chalk and conté pencils on blue paper
 49 cm x 73 cm



ROBERT CLINCH 1957 -

Mother, 2016
 graphite and chalk pencils on blue paper
 49 cm x 44 cm

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Gallery Exhibition Hours:
 Tues - Fri 10am – 6pm, Sat 1pm – 5pm