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BUILDING DWELLING RATBIKES

In early 2015 I was approached by a group of motorcycle enthusiasts, the N.I.Rats, to make a documentary. They had no clear agenda in the form of a point that needed to be made, or clear arc in terms of a storyline to be relayed; just a passion and energy for what it was they were interested in - Ratbikes. I am not a biker, prior to my contact with the Rats I had never heard of a Ratbike, but I was immediately struck by their passion and energy as expressed in their vehicles - beautifully compromised, outlandish yet humble.

What emerged was that Ratbikes are strange machines which straddle extreme aesthetics and raw utility - the result of the creative problem-solving of it's owner who is unable to rely on the conventional means of motorcycle maintenance, but needs to keep the thing running, while at the same time making imaginative interpretative leaps. The act of painting the bike matte-black, initially intended to cover up the fact that the vehicle has been ratted, has now become subverted to be a source of pride - a way of drawing attention to the fact that it is a Ratbike. This becomes the point of departure when the elemental act of building and dwelling begins to intermingle with the mythology of the Ratbike.

The Ratbike adapts and evolves as it's user's needs change. This, as with the 'pure' Ratbikes born out of extreme situations or financial constraints, may be strictly practical. If the bike breaks down, it needs to be physically changed in order to get it running. But, again as we move towards aesthetics, the Ratter's relationship with or understanding of the mythology might slip - their politics or tastes may change and with them, the bike. The ratlike as a piece of equipment is therefore an extension, not only of the body, but the personality - or rather an idealised and mythologised version - of the Ratter, constantly moving and never fixed.

The dualist nature of body and mind collapse in the realisation of the Ratbike - a singular object of necessity and political action.



[HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/MOLLOYAJ/RATSTALES](https://vimeo.com/molloyaj/ratstailes)