

It's All About Paradise 2

Blank Gallery, Brighton
17 – 30 October

Blank Gallery is on the western fringes of Brighton and Hove, well beyond the city's elegant Regency Terraces and broad suburban avenues. Part of a shift east and west along the south coast as creative types seek more affordable places to work and exhibit, the gallery rubs shoulders with the obligatory range of light industrial units, car repair shops, furniture wholesalers and evangelical churches. With their cheaper rents, such zones are a natural home for urban artists, though it is of course harder to generate the desired footfall or profile for exhibitions in relatively out of the way locations. The emerging artists and writers involved with 'It's All About Paradise 2', however, face this with a welcome sense of ambition: their show boasts a full-colour catalogue – with its own specially designed typeface, no less – as well as a determination to tackle the bigger artistic and philosophical issues.

Whilst at times the ambition results in rather overblown rhetoric about the exhibition's aims, in essence the project explores those conceptual favourites of reproduction and authenticity in art. Ned McConnell's *7 Ways to Tell a Story* uses remade films shown via an already dated iMac G4 squared up to a retro portable TV and Sandra Heathcote repackages Guatemalan Worry Dolls for a variety of topical Western anxieties. Emelye Perry presents *Recovering the Power of Speech*, a performance/text patchworked from the contradictory oratory of Barack Obama, Adolf Hitler, Virginia Woolf, Mother Teresa and others. Meanwhile, Lorenza Ippolito's video work "interviews" a metronome about beauty and functionality, usefulness and authenticity. These works deal competently with their themes, but have for me a somewhat explanatory effect; I too quickly assimilate the points they make, and find myself craving for something that lingers beyond this mere understanding.

On the project's blog, Giuseppe Iozzi suggests that artists often feel "lumbered with art history", and whilst the show has valiantly shouldered the burden, it's ultimately the more playful and poetic work that proves compelling. Daniella Norton engages directly with the weighty business of

art's history when she clammers atop a stepladder to drop hefty monographs and theoretical tomes onto the delicate huts she has crafted from paper. The formal qualities of this work, with its attention to framing, colour and light extend a modest joke into something visually and conceptually powerful. What's more, there's a delicious sense of tension as, off camera, one hears the creaking steps, and awaits the imminent and always dreadful thud. This bathetic humour is also manifest through Tila Rodriguez-Past's wonky series of fake hunter's trophies, in which cardboard, papier-mâché and flock replicate supposed animal originals, and where their dead-eyed stares are reproduced with marbles. A different take on Hechizas, a Mexican term for rough copies of mass produced objects, occurs in Rodriguez-Past's simple video installation: moving imagery of broken glass is projected onto a static white sphere, instantly evoking a ghostly glitter ball. On the wall behind, the object poignantly effects its own small eclipse. The work is certainly about beauty and functionality, the copy and the authentic, but in such a way that one experiences the idea poetically rather than being lectured about it.

This strategy reaches its apotheosis with Giuseppe Iozzi's work. In *Unseen-in-Between*, a video alluding to the "tweening" technique by which animators generate intermediate frames between images, he employs Flash animation to morph between detritus from the streets around the gallery and imagery of those self-same streets taken from Google Earth. Despite the hi-tech method, the visual effect is curiously like watching the slow ooze of spilled paint. His other sculptural works have precisely the opposite result: their intruded/extruded shapes suggest digital generation, though in fact derive from nothing more than the slow blunting of a Stanley knife. Pieces of carpet have been cut into shapes gradually increasing in size but initially determined by the same nondescript found objects used in the animation (a chip fork, a coffee stirrer, a Magic Tree air freshener...) so that they form a landscape of small mountains and crevasses across the gallery floor. Much more than an academic analysis of our culture of the copy, this work widens the space between real and reproduced in order to usefully delay any neat response to either.

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