

## False Witness

### **Eric Bainbridge, Marcus Coates, Francis Gomila & Alonso Gil, Laura Lancaster, Ant Macari, and Cecilia Stenbom**

7<sup>th</sup> April – 12<sup>th</sup> May 2007

Thurs - Sat, 12 -5pm (or by appointment)

Preview: Good Friday 6<sup>th</sup> April, 6 - 9pm

**Workplace Gallery** are pleased to present *False Witness* a group exhibition of new and existing works by six gallery artists. Drawing its title from the Ninth Commandment: *Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.* (Exodus 20:16) *False Witness* explores moral ambiguity concealed at the periphery of artworks initially presented in the more or less orthodox guises of Drawing, Performance, Sculpture, Sound, and Video which are then corrupted through multi-faceted cultural referencing.

**Eric Bainbridge** experienced culture shock in Bangkok. There on a British Council residency Bainbridge speaks of a place of extremes where the sacred and profane coexist and merge, the artists awe and terror embodied in Bangkok's river - the *Chao Phraya* - a constant brown ooze from the heart of the jungle, a place where you don't survive. Bainbridge's series of Bangkok Sculptures present a New Modernism. His cool refined structures articulate space and modernist architectural ideals as a strategy of escape from the engulfing sweaty humidity of a city known as much from a western eye for its cheapness of life and sex industry as it is for its traditional heritage of religion and culture. Despite the Artist's attempts Bangkok seeps back in through the tropical hardwoods of Indonesian DIY stores, fake melamine, and a cheap looking novelty light bulb winking flirtatiously from purple to blue to green to red...

**Marcus Coates'** 2006 HD film *Radio Shaman* is documentation of an interview on Norwegian Radio where Coates, a polite Englishman in suit, spectacles, and stag skin, continues in his role of Shaman to provide his services to the people of Stavanger, a middle class Norwegian town dealing with a sudden influx of Nigerian immigrants bringing with them the social problems of poverty, prostitution, and a spread of HIV. Coates' film explores these issues, taboo in Norwegian society, by performing a Shamanic ritual in the local centres of Religion, Politics and on the street corner. Coates' role as Shaman in the film meets straightforward acceptance, with strangely no questioning of the authenticity of such a figure regardless of his deadpan self-mocking delivery. We as audience are given a persuasive middle class gentleman of an idol in whom we can choose to believe.

**Francis Gomila & Alonso Gil's** collaboration consists of a compilation of all the known versions of the Cuban classic *Guantanamera* forming an endless soundtrack for the ground floor of the Gallery. *Guantanamera* reflects upon the use of music as an instrument of torture by US Armed forces on their detainees in Afghanistan, Iraq and Guantanamo Bay. Originally sited in a subway ventilator shaft during Arco Madrid earlier this year the work simultaneously created havoc and entertainment day and night. Whilst the city's legendary nightlife welcomed the new accompaniment to their bar and restaurant hopping, during the daytime nearby banks and businesses reacted strongly against the repetitive and continuous music, compounded by the inaccessibility to the amplification equipment and its awkward proximity to Madrid's main Metro line.

**Laura Lancaster** has made a new installation for the exhibition. Upon finding a photographic album of an anonymous young woman at a local market, Lancaster took to the procedural task of copying each photograph as a drawing onto the dedicatory pages torn from old second hand books. On closer inspection the occasional photograph reveals a portrait of Hitler in the living room of ordinary domesticity, and the ink of Nazi beaurocracy rubber-stamped on official photographs. It transpires that the young woman, like many Germans of that era, is a member of the Nazi party. By making generic this archive of images and occasions, birthdays, holidays, parties, and dances, Lancaster's work draws out a question from within our initial nostalgic response, revealing a darker shadow behind the empathy and sentiment that is initially evoked.

**Ant Macari's** new wall drawing *How To Beat Children* is an illustrated text from Bernard Shaw's 1903 drama *Man & Superman*, a Don Juan themed comedy which itself is a deeper reflection on Nietzsche's philosophical ideas of an *Ubermensch*. This contentious excerpt, overtly provocative in a gallery setting, hides partially behind Macari's over elaborate decorative illuminations. Made in magic marker referencing the typographic vernacular of 1920's American East Coast Tattoos and their indelible proclamations, Macari's work is oblique and coded, always turning away from easy reading.

**Cecilia Stenbom's** subject is herself. Through the means of narcissistic projection into fantastical roles such as a US Marine, Police Cop, or Multilingual Translator she finds a way to examine contemporary culture. Stenbom exposes our desires by appropriating genres of mass media and commodity such as advertising, documentary and the TV movie, absurdly fulfilling the expectations that those genres set up. In her *Search & Destroy* series Stenbom is an unlikely Vietnam Veteran crawling through the dunes of Druridge Bay in Northumberland to a reportage narrative medley gleaned from *Apocalypse Now*, *Platoon* and *Full Metal Jacket*. Forming a knowingly amateurish pastiche, Stenbom carries through to completion the wants of a culture constantly beckoning to a place that should never be reached.