

"All my favourite singers couldn't sing..."

Dan Arps, Tanya Axford, Darren Banks, Sophie Lisa Beresford, Hugo Canoilas, Marcus Coates, Jo Coupe, Ashley Hipkin, Graham Hudson, Laura Lancaster, Rachel Lancaster, Ant Macari, Paul Merrick, Eleanor Moreton, Melanie Schiff, Cecilia Stenbom.

Preview: Friday 29th August 6 – 9pm

30th August – 27th September 2008

Tues - Sat, 11am -5pm (or by appointment)

"All my favourite singers couldn't sing..." is the first exhibition at The Old Post Office, the new home of Workplace Gallery in the heart of Gateshead Town centre. This group exhibition includes works by represented gallery artists alongside new local talent and invited international artists and spans all 3 floors of the 18th Century red brick building.

A weird abstract painting hovers above the after swing of a Golfer in a palm tree landscape, silhouetted in front of a sunset sky. **Dan Arps** makes additions to found posters by gluing and tacking painted symbols and shapes to their glossy surfaces. The resulting images occupy a tense position between expectation and fantasy. In Arps' work the promise of the perfect feel-good moment is thrown into doubt.

Tanya Axford's *'Hula'* is a Super 8 film installation documenting the artist *Hula Hooping* in a blacked out room whilst being randomly exposed by a series of oversensitive 'slave' camera flashes triggered by an intermittently firing strobe light. The random strobe effect creates a film that through its intermittent and abrupt exposures circumnavigates performance, animation, memory and dislocation. *'Hula'* is shown for the first time at Workplace Gallery, the film looping up through the three floors of the building through the stairwell.

'Public Sculpture / Private Radar' by **Darren Banks** is a looped excerpt from a found video of a heroic Cold War era Moore-esque figurative sculpture slowly turning from left to right like a radar sweeping the horizon to a wailing siren-like soundtrack. Shown on an upturned found 80's plastic TV set Banks combines past signifiers of progress and modernity whilst confronting them with their own obsolescence to create a tense object that reflects our desire for power and fear of collapse and knowingly sends up Public Sculpture (past and present) in the process...

'Pizza Shop Dance' by **Sophie Lisa Beresford** is a video of the artist dancing manically to a hardcore Makina dance track in her local Pizza shop in Sunderland, a regular occurrence that the Artist documented for her recent degree show at Sunderland University. Beresford's work emerges from deep within the 'Charva' culture of the North East of England to be mixed with her own take on aspects of Hinduism, Mysticism and New Age Philosophy.

Since his epic solo installation "Propaganda" at Workplace Gallery in 2006 **Hugo Canoilas** has continued to make artworks that explore art and politics whilst fluctuating between the formal and the figurative. His new sculpture *'Sit down and try another chair (To J.M.J.)'* presents us with a "Sexy/fashionable intervention on a red square by Malevich" in which a seat less chair frame painted flame red is bisected by an elegant, but nevertheless dislocated, shiny black mannequins leg.

Marcus Coates' ongoing investigation into the natural world and its problematic relationship to society is evidenced here in two works. *'Blue Footed Booby'* was made by the artist whilst on a research trip in the Galapagos Islands, the artist dressing up in a colourful outfit handmade and painted from found cardboard boxes, photographed outside a human dwelling in one of the Galapagos more impoverished neighbourhoods. *'Britain's Bitterns'* is a folk song written and sung by Coates lamenting the demise of the rare bird from the British Isles.

Jo Coupe's new work told her to give it some of her favourite jewellery. Wall mounted Bronze castings of Chickens Feet and Anthuriums, (also known as Painter's Palettes) support rotting fruit and brightly coloured necklaces, earrings and trinkets to form a sinister looking talisman. Coupes ongoing research into chemistry and natural sciences is seemingly leading us towards a darker Voodoo like visual language in which Witchcraft and so called 'Primitive' cultures are assembled from the detritus of our own.

Ashley Hipkin's discrete wall mounted sculptures in highly finished and luxurious turned hardwoods are taken from the profiles of the nose cones of Fighter Jets. Serving as both a lexicon of boyhood fantasy and taxonomy of the sculptor's craft these works are a persistent and intruding reminder of worldwide aggression and the machinations of war.

Graham Hudson uses the tools of his trade, a jack saw, a tape measure, a cardboard box to assemble a precarious minimal sculpture held in tension by a reflexive assertion of the functional aspects of its constituent parts. As the saw bites into the top of a high wall its handle forms a fulcrum for a tape measure to spool through and counter balance the box by its own weight high up the wall as if ready for a prat-fall prank of slapstick nature. Its title *'Blackmail Spectacle'* implies the exchange, interdependency and implicit failure within the relationship of one object to another.

Through a series of installations combining found 35mm slides and cine film projected onto second hand books and picture frames **Laura Lancaster** confronts us with moments in time that are simultaneously lost in the anonymity of the found image and ever present in our innate nostalgia. These films and slides are key to Lancaster's practice as a painter, forming the source material of much of her practice over the last few years. In these works sightseeing, holidays and leisure become silent weighty monuments to humanity and its passing.

Rachel Lancaster's paintings, drawings, and photographs use images from paused cult TV and Film. In her works based on explosions catastrophic moments are frozen in time stripped of scale and context, blurring fiction and reality. Playing with the periphery of our imagination the images take on an almost pure abstract absoluteness that points towards the possibility of an ugly endgame.

For **Ant Macari** Drawing is the most direct and immediate way of sharing both simple and complex ideas. It is a language of symbolism, significance, instruction and occasionally ambiguity. Posing the question: can meaning ever truly be known? In a new work for the exhibition Macari works to improvise within the imposed parameters of the gallery building.

Paul Merrick's *'Raised Painting (#1)'* is a continuation of his interrogation of painting and process in relation to the found object. A scrap aluminium surface is raised above the floor supported by modular utilitarian fluorescent lighting units, semi clad in sterling board to reveal the innards within. *'Raised Painting (#1)'* is reminiscent of a defunct and stripped back Donald Judd style minimal sculpture which asserts itself through challenging and beguiling the viewer to accept it as Art.

Eleanor Moreton paints an imaginary world of princes, anchoresses, and queens and cottages. The princes come in a range of disguises - their inspiration ranges from Disney to Slovakian puppets. They are always ridiculous. The fairytale world that Moreton creates alludes to German Romanticism and psychoanalytic theory, both of which have explored the theme of the unhomely (or uncanny). But her position is always one of ambivalence, both desiring the imaginary and knowing that it is a desire that cannot be fulfilled.

The still life photographs of **Melanie Schiff** are composed of objects that belong to human experience. Often referents of a generation and an American youth: Compact Disc cases, empty beer bottles, blue jeans, album covers. Schiff's subject could be herself, but more accurately they are constructions that point to romanticised experiences. Exposed in the sobering natural light of the morning after the objects in Schiff's photographs act as props that imply a narrative, conjuring a sense of youthful carefree abandonment for which we perhaps still yearn.

Cecilia Stenbom's video *'The Protocol'* is a re-staging of an American infomercial, which in turn is an imitation of a US talk show. An interviewee is selling a book about a weight loss cure; a set of guidelines explaining how to lose weight without any deprivation or exercise, only occasionally interrupted in her relentless flow by an interviewer seemingly in on the act. Stenbom performs both characters in a mirror image that shifts the film away from straightforward re-enactment reflecting back the neurotic inner chitchat of the consumer, and the perpetual sales pitch cloaked beneath the guise of junk science and daytime TV.

For further information regarding any of the works in the exhibition please visit sales@workplacegallery.co.uk

The next exhibition at Workplace Gallery will be a solo exhibition by Eric Bainbridge opening on 10th October.



Artists Biographies

Dan Arps (b. 1976, Christchurch, New Zealand) lives and works in Auckland, New Zealand. Recent exhibitions include the solo exhibitions 'Motivation Bunker' at Neon Parc, Australia and 'Fractal Tears' at Michael Lett, Auckland, New Zealand in 2008. He is widely collected internationally including in The Chartwell Collection, New Zealand. His inclusion in "All my favourite singers couldn't sing ..." marks his first UK exhibition. He is represented by Neon Parc Gallery, Melbourne Australia

Tanya Axford (b. 1973, Kent, UK) lives and works in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. In 2005 She completed an MA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths College, London. Recent exhibitions include Camberwell Green, London and a solo exhibition at The Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool, UK.

Darren Banks (b. 1978, Orset, UK) lives and works in Rushden, UK. He is currently showing in The Golden Record, Collective Gallery. Recent exhibitions include Epic, Auto-Italia, London, Kingfishers Tales, Union Gallery, London, and Metteurs en Scène, The Embassy, Edinburgh. In October 08 Workplace Gallery will present his work as part of a 4 artist curated exhibition at Zoo Art Fair, The Royal Academy, London.

Sophie Lisa Beresford lives and works in Sunderland and recently graduated from a BA Hons in Fine Art from Sunderland University. Her inclusion in "All my favourite singers couldn't sing ..." marks her first exhibition at Workplace Gallery.

Hugo Canoilas (b. 1977, Lisbon, Portugal) lives and works in Lisbon. Recent solo exhibitions include *Paisagens*, Certamen Explum, Puerto Lumbreras, Spain, *Endless Killing*, curated by Chus Martinez, Huarte Contemporary Art Center, Pamplona, Spain, and *Peinture, Sculpture, Architecture, Politique*, Quadrado Azul Gallery, Lisbon. Canoilas is represented by GALERIE NOSBAUM & REDING, Luxembourg.

Marcus Coates (b.1968, London, UK) lives and works in London. He is currently exhibiting in MANIFESTA7 Trento, Italy. Recent exhibitions include Hamsterwheel at Venice Biennial and Malmo Konsthall, Malmo, Sweden, Micro-narratives : tentation des petites réalités, Musée d'Art moderne de Saint-Etienne, France, and Martian Museum of Terrestrial Art, Barbican Art Gallery, London. Forthcoming exhibitions include Tate Triennial, Tate Britain, London (09), a solo exhibition at Workplace Gallery (09), and a solo presentation by Workplace Gallery at NADA Art Fair, Miami in December 2008.

Jo Coupe (b. 1975 Stoke-on Trent, UK) lives and works in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK. Recent exhibitions include Tatton Park Biennial, Cheshire and *An Archaeology*, Project 176, London. In April 2008 she won the best artist prize at 101 Tokyo Art Fair for her work *Enough Rope*. Forthcoming projects include solo exhibitions at Workplace Gallery and Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth. Coupe is artist in residence with global aluminium producer Alcan.

Ashley Hipkin (b. 1972) lives and works in Northumberland, UK. Recent exhibitions include 'BALLAST' a solo exhibition at three venues: Gallery North, Newcastle upon Tyne, Allenheads Contemporary Art, Allenheads, and Hexham General Hospital, UK. He recently completed a Leverhume Residency with Northumbria Healthcare Trust and is Senior lecturer in Fine Art at Northumbria University.

Graham Hudson (b. 1977) lives and works in London and LA. His work has been widely exhibited and collected internationally. Recent solo exhibitions include Jan Kunen Museum, Oss, Locust Projects, Miami, Rokeby, London, and Monitor, Rome. He is currently showing a new commission in Construction Sites, Project Space 176, London. Hudson is represented by Rokeby, London, Monitor, Rome, and Zinger Presents, Amsterdam.

Laura Lancaster (b. 1979, Hartlepool, UK) lives and works in Newcastle upon Tyne. Recent exhibitions include Micro-narratives : tentation des petites réalités, Musée d'Art moderne de Saint-Etienne, France. Forthcoming projects and exhibitions include Ego Documents: The Autobiographical in Contemporary Art at KunstMuseum, Bern in Switzerland where Lancaster will also be artist in residence and in October Workplace Gallery will present her work as part of a 4 artist curated exhibition at Zoo Art Fair, The Royal Academy, London.

Rachel Lancaster (b. 1979, Hartlepool, UK) lives and works in Newcastle and graduated from Fine Art at North Umbria University. She has exhibited locally and nationally and has work in a number of private collections. Her inclusion in “All my favourite singers couldn’t sing ...” marks her first exhibition at Workplace Gallery and in October we will present her work as part of a 4 artist curated exhibition at Zoo Art Fair, The Royal Academy, London.

Ant Macari (b.1976, Galashiels, Scotland, UK) lives and works in Newcastle and graduated from Fine Art at Newcastle University in 2004. Recent exhibitions and projects include ‘Caput Mortuum (Fresh As Tomorrow)’ his first major solo exhibition at BAL TIC, Gateshead in 2007, a permanent commission for Side Café, Newcastle, and ‘False Witness’ at Workplace Gallery in also in 2007.

Paul Merrick (b. 1973, Oxford, UK) lives in Gateshead and works from his studio in Newcastle. Recent exhibitions include Beacon of Hope, Art Gene, Barrow in Furness and Moved at Workplace Gallery both in 2007. In 2005 he completed a major installation of over 60 paintings entitled ‘Capella Continuum’ at Northern Rock Headquarters, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK.

Eleanor Moreton (b. 1956, London, UK) lives and works in London. Recent and forthcoming exhibitions include *Curiouser and Curiouser*, Galleri Rebecca Kormind, Copenhagen, *A Buried Life*, Reg Vardy Gallery, Sunderland, UK, *Eleanor Moreton*, DLI, Durham, UK, *John Moores Contemporary Painting Prize*, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK, and *East International*, Norwich Art Gallery, UK. Moreton is currently artist in residence at Durham Cathedral and is represented by Ceri Hand Gallery, Liverpool.

Melanie Schiff (b. 1977, Chicago, US) lives and works in Chicago. Recent exhibitions include *New Work*, Uschi Kolb, Karlsruhe, Germany, 12 x 12, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, Whitney Biennial, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, USA, *Sympathy for the Devil: Art and Rock and Roll Since 1967*, curated by Dominic Molon, Museum of Contemporary Art, North Miami, USA ;traveling to Musée d’art Contemporain de Montréal, Québec. Melanie Schiff is represented by Kavi Gupta Gallery Chicago.

Cecilia Stenbom (b. 1976, Stockholm, Sweden) lives in Gateshead and works from her studio in Newcastle upon Tyne. In 2004 she graduated from an MA at Glasgow School of Art. Recent exhibitions include Breslau CV Rydek, Wroclaw, Poland, King Fisher’s Tales, Union Gallery. London, and Daily Escapes, Muu Gallery, Helsinki, Finland.