

Art Monthly
'London Round-up'
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By N/A

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Paul Sietsema
installation view



an imaginary construct made to, as Sietsema puts it, 'say something about structures and reception versus depiction'.

In *Concession Drawing 2*, 2012, Sietsema again delights in ambiguity. It looks like a drawing of the words *concession à perpétuité* carved in stone. A concession is a territory, like Guantánamo Bay, leased from the sovereign state for trade or military purposes. By rendering the words on paper, Sietsema dismantles the imperial powers' overarching vision and their belief that they can own the future as well as the present. Empires implode and perpetuity is suddenly finite, just as the abrupt collapse of certainty we may experience when digital and hand-painted techniques are set off against each other. This slide in perception between time and matter is what intrigues Sietsema.

The series of four large, blown-up photographs of a yacht at sea, called 'Calendar Boats', 2012, also shifts expectations of visual veracity. The images look like reproduced images from *Time* or *Life* magazines of healthy wealth and endless pleasure, complete with creases and small rips on the paper. The images repeat but the tone changes slightly and the identity number on the sail alters from 2010 through to 2013, appearing to mark time even though the boat remains unmoving. Sietsema utilised pre-digital photographic techniques normally used for restoration to build up the image in fragments, so that each one is unique and makes us reconsider the hackneyed iconicity of the image. It provides a witty riposte to Marcel Broodthaers' slide projection, *Bateau-Tableau*, 1973, in which he photographed details of a found 19th-century amateur naval painting. Broodthaers' slide projector also marked time with the simplicity of a metronome. Like stills from an extended moment, Sietsema examines how reproducible media work to enlist and disseminate symbols of success and halt time itself.

The film *Encre Chine*, 2012, presents a studio environment in which everything is coated in what looks like an oil spill. The viscous surfaces, with spots of glistening light, occasionally grant the cosmic scale of the universe pricked by starlight. It is hard to discern figure from ground: is that a pot of paint, a brush, a hammer and a pile of mounts or frames? All objects have the same visual equivalency in this field of dark matter. Significantly, *encre de Chine* was made from pine soot until fears of deforestation changed the source to burnt petroleum. The Chinese believed this 'rock oil' to be everlasting. It is as if Sietsema sees with what poet Amy Clampitt calls 'the unexampled clarity to the black core/ of what we are, of everything we were to be,/ have since become'. ■

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London Round-up

Camden Arts Centre • Studio Voltaire • Maureen Paley •
Dilston Grove • David Roberts Foundation

As this year's Frieze Art Fair opened, the obvious trend afoot was the accelerated blue-chipping of London's art world. This was discernible not only in Frieze's 'ancient to modern' spin-off, *Frieze Masters*, but in the simultaneous opening in Mayfair of outposts for David Zwirner and Michael Werner, big foreign galleries launching safely with heavyweight painters Luc Tuymans and Peter Doig. One perhaps visits Zwirner more to see the sumptuously remodelled architecture than to be surprised by the art; meanwhile – and, to hear the curators tell it, partly in deliberate reaction – intransigently unglamorous activity studs the city's fringes.

Most of Camden Arts Centre's spaces are given over to **Eric Bainbridge's** lusciously askew sculpting. Why Bainbridge, in his first London show for over a decade, wants to pick a fight with 1950s and 60s sculpture is not entirely clear, but in any case the steel constructions of David Smith and Anthony Caro are here metaphorically kicked through mud and reset at comic tilts. The opening cubic structure is draped with polyester and wool blankets, while a brown length of old-fashioned audio tape runs to it from a reel on the floor, the label suggesting Messiaen: the title is *that TURANGALIA SYMPHONY really rocks man!*, 2012. (One thinks, unexpectedly, of Rodney Graham's wry take-offs on bohemianism.) Elsewhere girders, L-beams and steel plates, scratched or painted in warm and dirty shades, are fused in offbeat equipose and draped with dirty tea towels. A quiet, amused showmanship is evident; while the works' besmirched formalism suggests, as this approach is wont to do, an exiling from Modernism's ambits, it also calls out Smith, Caro et al for unrealistic distance from the messy real world – a gap Bainbridge closes while maintaining an abstractionist grace.

Down in Clapham at Studio Voltaire, meanwhile, one might reasonably expect painting from **Nicole Eisenman**: after all, the American artist was presented as an elder stateswoman of the medium in this year's Whitney Biennial. But in one corner a little sign on a dowel insists 'NO 2D' and Eisenman's work here accordingly tumbles outwards as a roomful of unruly, made-in-situ plaster giants. A figure in Y-fronts stoops over a desk, regarding a pile of solidified dust; a female nude bends to flaunt her backside; a central figure slumps on a mattress; a top-hatted man pushes