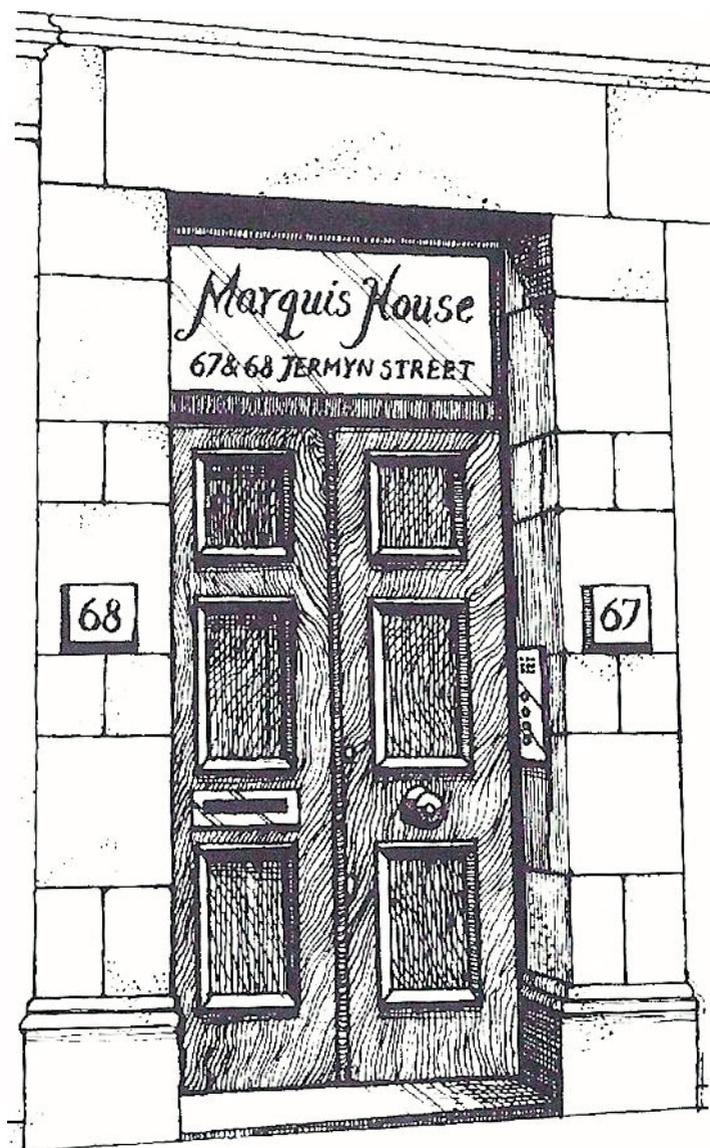


NOW & THEN



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AN EXHIBITION OF CONTEMPORARY ART
AND HISTORICAL OBJECTS

9TH - 26TH OCTOBER 2012

Organised by Adrian Dannatt

Harris Lindsay Works of Art
67, Jermyn Street
London, SW1Y 6NY

OF CURIOSITY

To be rich in admiration and free from envy, to rejoice greatly in the good of others, to love with such generosity of heart that your love is still a dear possession in absence or unkindness - these are the gifts which money cannot buy.

Robert Louis Stevenson

‘For myself I love all the artists’ – might be my version of a rousing line in the table talk and recollections of Samuel Rogers where amongst heated debate on the varying merits and failings of sundry versifiers it is admitted that – ‘for myself I love all the poets’. And so it is. For if someone proclaims themselves to be a ‘poet’ or an ‘artist’ I must automatically give them the benefit of the doubt, yes, grant them my affection even merely for the courage of their calling. For these, for me, are the people who make life worth living, civilisation civilisation.

Of course, unlike the 18th century England of Samuel Rogers when the rules and regulations of poetry were highly maintained (maybe more so than at any other period) today all sorts of things can be said to constitute ‘poetry’ and likewise ‘art’; in fact the majority of what is presented as poetry and art in our time would not be recognisable as such to a connoisseur of even one hundred years ago, let alone three.

This, of course, is completely natural as the purpose, meaning and practice of art is in a constant state of slow shift, the intention of the Byzantine Ikonist being as alien to that of the Georgian topographical watercolourist as the aims of the Belle Epoque salon Medallist are to the video installationist.

Thus to the 18th century expert not only would the majority of today's art be clearly cack but they would be equally dismissive of huge swathes of what are now revered as the greatest masterpieces in our museums. How startling these previous ramifications of taste and the prejudices of every era, to imagine that once upon a time we happily dissed everything from Italian Primitives to Vermeer and Rembrandt, Rubens and Victorian narrative painting, let alone such things as Tribal sculpture or Islamic calligraphy. Thus to the favoured rallying cry of 'it's just not art', I am happy to proffer instead my hopeless love for each and every soi disant 'artist' regardless of their work and regarding instead their bravery in being such a thing.

Naturally I do not have to love their actual oeuvre in the way I do their calling, my instinctive warmth toward the person who is supposedly a poet or painter may well chill somewhat upon perusal of what they produce, and like every single one of us I have my own instinctive preferences and prejudices doubtless born out of some complex admixture of nature, nurture and experience. And even here it is curious to consider the changes in one's own taste over the years, a penchant for Zulu war scenes somehow dovetailing into a passion for American Pop and back through Surrealism improbably into neo-classicism,

proving, though one does not wish to believe it, that canons of taste are never definitive, least of all for oneself.

In most science fiction scenarios of the future a monoculture is assumed to operate – everyone follows just one leader, everyone dresses a certain way, everyone uses a certain type of transport or worships a fixed single religion, everyone obeys Big Brother or wears zipped jumpsuits. Whereas, in reality the future would surely be as messy and diverse and complex as the everyday reality of contemporary life, no single way of being so dominant. Likewise, any futurologist would doubtless determine that only one sort of art making would have become the accepted norm by, say, 2012, that everyone would universally make and enjoy a single style of visual culture fixed as the 'art of our time.' For what science fiction futurology seemingly cannot conceive is further and wider fracture and diversity rather than increased cohesion.

Thus in any SF vision of the 21st century one might be presented with a James Turrell light-room as the art of the era, but how hard to reconcile this abstract environment with the massed visitors amongst Lucian Freud's portraits, including one of the reigning monarch no less, the most acclaimed British artist of the same period. And how to understand the sheer range of cultural expression on display simultaneously just, for example, in the small square mile of St James's where our current exhibition takes place, works ranging from commercial illustration to minimalism, graffiti tagging to flower studies, ceramics to video, trompe l'oeil to digital texting.

Some might claim that there is indeed an 'official' art of 2012, one supported by museums, curators and institutions rather than by popular mandate, and these might well be the same people who claim that 'painting' is out of favour, but the reality is, of course, far more nuanced, far richer. In truth, as any canny contemporary dealer will tell you, painting always remains the easiest and most profitable medium, and a close analysis of the statistics of even the most modish 'cutting-edge' galleries, yes some even in our same St James's, would reveal that in fact a dominant percentage of work they show might be termed 'painting.'

Thus the exhibitions mounted by museums today are in reality, as opposed to assumption, hearsay or glib generalisation, so varied and heterogeneous that it would be impossible to determine a dominant aesthetic. Figurative painting, whatever anyone claims to the contrary, has now been the most fashionable and favoured style amongst young and emerging and successful artists for more than a decade, and currently a new wave of 'abstract' painting is much in vogue amongst the international jeunesse d'au jour d'hui. An impartial close analysis of the schedules of contemporary art museums, and even the prizes they award, might well actually reveal a surprising, a startling, lack of bias. Indeed the 'conceptual' art which is supported by institutions often exists only because of them. Some might claim that is precisely what is wrong, but surely one of the roles of such organisations is to back the difficult and marginal, work which cannot survive commercially as it tests even further the boundaries of art, not to mention our patience.

What I really love about the art world, art worlds, is just how much and many there are of them, that utterly extraordinary variety and impossible range of different practices and peoples of every conceivable nationality, income, title, background, abode and estate, all doing their own thing and just hoping it sticks, in some way or another. I love equally the artists who give it all up and retire to Ladakh, as those who maintain several studios and teams of employees across the globe; the ones who keep going with the pottery in the rural obscurity of Welsh mountains, or gluing their collages in a hut on the Suffolk coast, as those who fill some parental ballroom with a giant romantic mural or personally finance their own postmodern palaces; the ones who make a manic log in red ink of their daily walk from Haringay to Soho, display their unemployment benefit forms in a charted mathematical grid, who collect driftwood on heaths, who trap rivers or build their own museums; all thus.

And what is truly inspiring in all this, the real magic, is that one simply cannot chart the vagaries of poverty and success, celebrity and obscurity, within this occult field. The fabled difficulty of art as investment-class-asset is precisely the slippery and unchartable nature of any such career, the movements of taste and money that back one figure and then another due to a vast range of often small factors, tiny shifts of thinking, miniature clues and cogs that eventually cohere to change the direction of art history. Even the most overtly successful of artists can see their career and prices slump in their own lifetime and likewise the most marginal of figures can eventually find themselves fêted with full scale retrospectives and

profiles. So often one thinks of Balthus in his Swiss domain, the largest, oldest and grandest chalet in all the land and his brother Pierre Klossowski who as an artist ended his days in a tiny apartment in a 1970s state housing block on the outskirts of Paris, and one surely thinks 'Quel chic' as if this was the only way to outwit, to outsmart, to trump him.

I love the fact that a contemporary artist can be extremely poor or astonishingly wealthy, tremblingly grand or laughably destitute, and that somehow despite this they share to some extent the same world. Even at the most extreme degree of separation, an equine-portraitist in Saratoga and a concrete-poetry performer in Shanghai, there is bound to be, somewhere and through someone, a certain overlap, a wealthy mainland collector who knows them both, a vernissage to which both are invited through friends of friends, a publication or party that brings them together. They can dismiss out of hand the creative activities of each other, each can swear that neither is making 'real art', but they are both living and working within the art world and somehow hopefully surviving.

When it comes to 'art' we are aware that today absolutely any and every thing can constitute such an entity, that there are no definitions or limitations other than our own taste, that fact we are thankfully still allowed to cry 'Pshaw, what absolute and blatant crap!' Of course we all enjoy criticising and dismissing things, that is our very nature, but I can't help suspect we currently put too much energy and ability into this essentially negative activity, rather than the harder art of celebration. I am instead for an openness,

a laissez faire enthusiasm, a bold non-judgemental spirit of optimism which might have something of the genuinely radical implications of Christ's doctrine of 'love' indeed. This is the mode whereby Andy Warhol operated, never saying a single negative thing about anything, reacting to everything he saw with a blank expression of intrigue, 'Gee, wow, that's really great.' Try it sometime, loving everything and everyone, and you'll find it can be more effectively and enjoyably annoying, enraging, than any form of criticism.

When we encounter a work of art we have to remember that it exists because someone went through the labour of thinking it into being and ensuring it was created as they intended; it embodies some idea or ideals, dream or necessity, made for as myriad reasons as there are media and means. What we should do is just give it a little bit of attention, something it is often extremely hard to do. Having risked the portentous Jesus-thing I hardly dare push such pretensions further by recalling how Simone Weil described the act of prayer, that of actively giving one's attention to someone else, as one of great difficulty, and indeed it is not for nothing that people pay other people, psychoanalysts etcetera, just to actually listen to them.

Anyone who has been on a studio visit to an artist or indeed merely had to occasion to let them rip during some endless drunken evening will have learnt that most artists simply long to be able to explain themselves and talk about their work, often to the exclusion of anything else, often for hours. If they are lucky and reach a certain level of worldly success they will be amply granted this

opportunity with devoted interviewers and TV crews and critics and historians hanging on their every word, but for many artists this chance comes all too rarely and their work is as easily ignored as those explications as to how and why it exists.

So, we should give it that little moment of attention, we should look at it, walk round it, perhaps even prod it when nobody is looking, and wonder what exactly the artist wanted to express with this thing, what we take it to mean and what they intended it to mean, the history it comes from and the future it is trying to establish for itself, the aesthetic, intellectual, sensual or formal qualities it embodies. We should start by pretending that we like it, whatever it is, then taking it from there. We should try our best to see the best in it, for what do we lose by such generosity of spirit other than the bitter pleasure of superiority. The artist is inherently generous in giving us some part of themselves and we should be courteous enough, civilised enough, to give back generosity with generosity, to dare offer an open responsiveness that is the very enemy of irony. Thus to say, how should I put it, that I like everything, unless I don't.

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Adrian Dannatt

Walberswick-Paris-Le Coudray
September 2012

THE ARTISTS

ADAM BARKER-MILL was born in 1940 in Wookey Hole; the caves were an early inspiration. Parents both artists. Parental pressure meant he was required to produce one painting every holiday; thus he never felt compelled to enter the art room while at school. Education: Winchester and Magdalen, Oxford (BA 4th class, Modern Languages). In 1963 he attempted briefly to paint in oils, but found 8mm film a more suitable medium for experiments with colour. Not yet having the bottle to be an artist, he joined the British film industry as editor then DOP (filmography: see adambarkermill.com). In 1984 he began making his own work. Major solo show Inverleith House, Edinburgh, 1997. Recent shows: Aberdeen, Amsterdam, Brixton, Stromness, Tobermory. Commissioned public sculpture for Edinburgh, Glasgow, Notting Hill Gate ('Ringstack', a light sculpture for the Notting Hill Improvements Group, was installed September 2012); lighting for the Portobello Popup Cinema; work for private houses in Argyll and Thailand.

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PAUL BENNEY, born in London, has for the past three decades produced a distinctive and singular body of work in both the U.S. and U.K. and is represented in public collections around the world including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York and the National Portrait Gallery, London. Influenced by Goya, Rembrandt and the German Symbolists, Benney's 'Night Paintings' are a continuation of the personal iconography that has preoccupied him since the 80s where

he lived and worked in New York's East Village. Benney is currently working as Resident Artist at Somerset House where his exhibition 'Night Paintings' runs until the 9th of December 2012.

LUCY CAVENDISH trained at City and Guilds Art School for a degree in Fine Art (1994). She has received awards from the Goldsmiths Company, the Royal Academy of Arts, and the David Threllfall Trust and been awarded Artist in Residence in Marrakech (1997) and Spain (1998). Previous exhibitions include the European Academy for the Arts (1998), Bartley Drey Gallery, London (1996), the Michael Parkin Gallery, London and the David Murray Travel Award Exhibition at the Royal Academy of Arts (1996). Cavendish has had four solo exhibitions at Thomas Williams Fine Art Ltd and teaches at the Prince's Drawing School.

JULIE COCKBURN was born in London in 1966. She studied Sculpture at Central Saint Martins. Solo exhibitions include Conversations, Lianzhou Foto Festival, Lianzhou, China, 2012; Portraits and Landscapes, Flowers, Cork Street, London, 2012; Filling The Cracks With Ceiling Wax, Flowers East, London, 2010. Group exhibitions include John Moores Painting Prize 2012, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; The World in London portrait commission for The Photographers' Gallery, London, 2012; Artists' Postcards – The Jeremy Cooper Collection, Spike Island, Bristol, 2012; Jerwood Drawing Prize 2007 and 2010,

Jerwood Space, London and touring; Her work is held in the collections of British Land, UK; Goss-Michael Foundation, USA; The Wellcome Collection, London, UK; and Yale Center For British Art, USA. In 2010 she won the Salon Art Prize, Matt Roberts Arts.

MILEIN COSMAN was born in Gotha, Germany, in 1921 and brought up and educated in Düsseldorf until 1937. She attended schools in Switzerland before coming to England two years later to study at the Slade School of Fine Art. She worked as a freelance artist for various magazines, and national and international newspapers, including the Radio Times, and began book illustration in the late 1940s. Her first solo exhibition was in London in 1949. Best known for her ability to depict movement and character in her drawings, particularly of musicians, dancers, and leading cultural figures, her work is represented in many leading museums, including the National Portrait Gallery, the British Museum, and the V. & A. in London, the Ashmolean in Oxford, the Stadtmuseum, Düsseldorf and the Kupferstichkabinett, Berlin. Her publications include Musical Sketchbook (1957), Lifelines (2012), and several collaborations with her late husband, the musician and writer, Hans Keller.

EMMA DOUGLAS studied at Central School of Art & Design, Middlesex Polytechnic, the Ecole des Arts Décoratifs, Paris and received an MA in Printmaking from the Royal College of Art. She has exhibited widely including at the

Royal Academy (Stowells Trophy), the Whitworth Gallery, the Hayward Annual, the Whitechapel Open, the Mulhouse Biennale, the Barbican Art Gallery, the Serpentine Gallery, the Ljubljana Biennale and at Flowers Gallery.

BABAK GHAZI (born 1976, lives in London) organises the Not Yet Night events series and self-publishes Not Yet magazine. In 2008, his exhibition 'Model' was featured in the 'Nought to Sixty' programme of emerging artists at the ICA, London. Since then he has jettisoned his art production to concentrate on the manifestation of 'Lifework', a personal synthesis of art and life. An exhibition of this project was recently presented at Raven Row, London.

STEVEN C. HARVEY was born in 1967 in Stafford, England. Harvey studied Fine Art at Wimbledon School of Art, London, 1986-89. He has participated in group shows in London, Paris, New York, Athens and Luxembourg. Recent group shows include: the third Thessaloniki Biennale of Contemporary Art (2011); 'Brave New World', Musée D'Arte Moderne Grand-Duc Jean (MUDAM), Luxembourg (2010); 'I Dreamt About', MUDAM Luxembourg (2011); T-Tris, B.P.S 22, Charleroi, Belgium (2009); Athens Art Fair (2008). Recent solo shows include: 'Vehicles', Agathi Gallery, Athens (2008); 'Steven C. Harvey – Vehicles', MUDAM, Luxembourg (2012). His work has been selected for inclusion in the upcoming Vitamin D2 to be

published by Phaidon Press in 2013, an important new international survey of significant developments in recent contemporary drawing.

SIMON HEAH is a London-based architect with a small practice that takes him to Europe and to the Near and Far East. His passion is observing. He is interested in making art. He has taken suites of photographs (portraiture) of strong narrative content between 1995 and 2003. The work in this show is taken by iPhone and not re-modelled on the computer, nor were any apps harmed in the making of the image.

HECTOR RAMSAY is a Scottish artist who lives up high in a Florentine garret that looks over some of man's greatest creations. He was apprentice and then assistant to Leonard Pardon in the 1980s, carrying out commissions all over the world. He subsequently specialised in fresco painting, and in recent years has concentrated exclusively on drawing, his most recent exhibition, 'Micromacro' Feb.-April 2012, at the Fundação D. Luis I, Cascais, Portugal.

ALANNAH ROBINS graduated from the National College of Art and Design, Dublin. While working on landscape art in Scotland in 1995, she completed a residency in Grizedale Forest Sculpture Park, Cumbria. She was a founder member of the Atlantic Artists' Cooperative in Connemara, which ran

from 2002-2005. In 2008 she won the Award of Excellence for her sculpture in the exhibition, 'Outside: Insight, Sculpture in the Gardens'. She has participated in 'New Living Art', at the Irish Museum of Contemporary Art and 'Marathon Irish', Dialogue Cultural Space, London. She has received awards from the Galway County Council and the Arts Council of Ireland. She currently lives in Stockholm.

THE ORGANISER

Adrian Dannatt grew up in Islington and has subsequently lived in Tribeca and the Bastille. His publications include works on such varied contemporary practitioners as Wim Delvoye, Anthony Palliser, Pierre Bismuth, Saint Clair Cemin, Muf architects, the designers Mattia Bonetti and Mark Humphrey and most recently Paul Benney. He has organised all sorts of exhibitions in all sorts of places, not least 'Surrealism In Wales' which just opened at the Last Gallery in Llangedog. Described by Guy Debord as 'le héros journalistique' and by the Louvre as a 'dilettante et flâneur' he was also denounced by the late Malcolm McLaren as a 'known mischief-maker.'

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THE HOSTS

Harris Lindsay Ltd., established in 1967 and operating discreetly from large premises in Jermyn Street, has sold works of art to over sixty museums and public collections all over the world, from Virginia to Versailles, from the Tate Gallery to the Tokyo National Museum. Dealing in works of art of all kinds and periods, firmly eschewing specialisation and interested above all in the trade in ideas, Marieke MacMahon and Bruce Lindsay are particularly pleased to host the current exhibition, which juxtaposes a diverse group of contemporary works with their eclectic mix of older objects.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Thanks again to Joan Dannatt for suggesting the original title of this exhibition, now shamelessly reprised for a second time, and likewise to Natasha de Wiart for once more bravely suffering through all its inevitable tribulations. To Ann Dannatt for giving me the Table-Talk of Samuel Rogers - in its splendid Notting Hill edition - and once again to Anthony Asbury whose Greville Press poetry pamphlets granted us the elegant template for this publication. Lastly and far from leastly to the artists themselves who agreed to participate and then did so.

In memory of Serge Spitzer

29th June 1951 - 9th September 2012

A Truly Generous Artist

