

Ten sculptors you should meet

Text SKYE SHERWIN

Contemporary sculpture might be the most liquid of disciplines: spreading out across rooms into cavernous installations, absorbing video projections or evaporating into air. Whether made from bronze or brussels sprouts, **almost anything is possible**, as the work of these 10 young artists shows.

SEAN EDWARDS

ONCE SEAN EDWARDS HAD DONE WITH IT, HIS PENCIL WAS A GHOST OF ITS FORMER SELF.

Realised as a 3-D photocopy, after a process where the original was sanded away to nothing, it made for a poor black and white impostor in the “real”, many-coloured world. “The photocopied works reflect on the artistic process,” says the young Welsh sculptor, who graduated from London’s Slade School of Fine Art in 2005. “I was interested in the idea of creating something that held, to all intents and purposes, the ambition of the original, but somehow failed and became simply an apparition.”

Edwards’s work often goes on a journey from three dimensions to two and back again. An ongoing project, K-007, involves a funny, complex system that takes daily dedication. Appropriating imagery from that ubiquitous bit of greasy-spoon mass media, The Sun, the

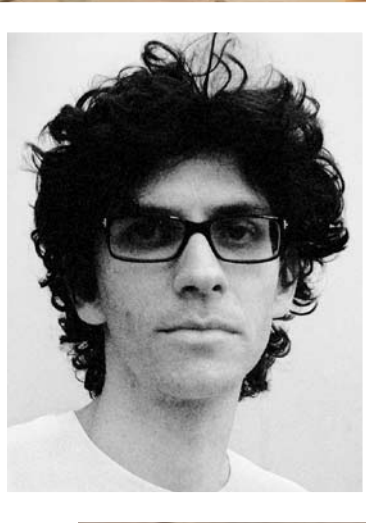
artist cuts out the picture of a particular Page 3 model every time she appears in the paper. Far from the habits of the usual obsessive fan, he then uses her silhouette to cut a shape from chequered dolls’-house paper, which is then turned into a cylinder. One of these was finally cast in bronze, for Bronze Keeley, a material just as solid as the original woman. Edwards has made almost 100 of the black and white likenesses, and says he will continue until the model stops working.

“I was partly interested in the peculiarity of a glamour model as a recording of time and news and her relationship to the daily task of ‘working-class labour’,” he says. Bringing her into the realm of art, it’s a basic series of transformations, which utterly change her original purpose.

The Keeley series is knowingly convoluted, but in highlighting a thing’s relationship to context, Edwards’s work can be elegantly minimal. His chipboard sticks are modest little things, painted simply and delicately leant against steps or in the corners of rooms. “In some way, I’m trying to highlight the importance of the physical world in understanding any object.”

With this interest in work *in situ*, it’s perhaps not surprising that for his ICA solo exhibition last year, Edwards rocked up with all the objects from his studio. Within the gallery’s 2007 Nought to Sixty programme displaying work of emerging artists, his installation “Maybe something like the way it should have been” included wooden blocks, paper cups, a plastic bag, duct tape and cardboard rolls. “It shows the process of making an exhibition,” he says, “highlighting something about regret or hindsight.” His choice of workaday tools and ephemera seems to suggest something tottering on the edge of becoming. Yet, as his somewhat melancholy title suggests, being an artist also means that, at some point, you have to get on with it and make do.

www.limoncellogallery.co.uk



DANIEL PASTEINER

BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE, DANIEL PASTEINER’S SCULPTURE HAS SERIOUS “OOH FACTOR”.

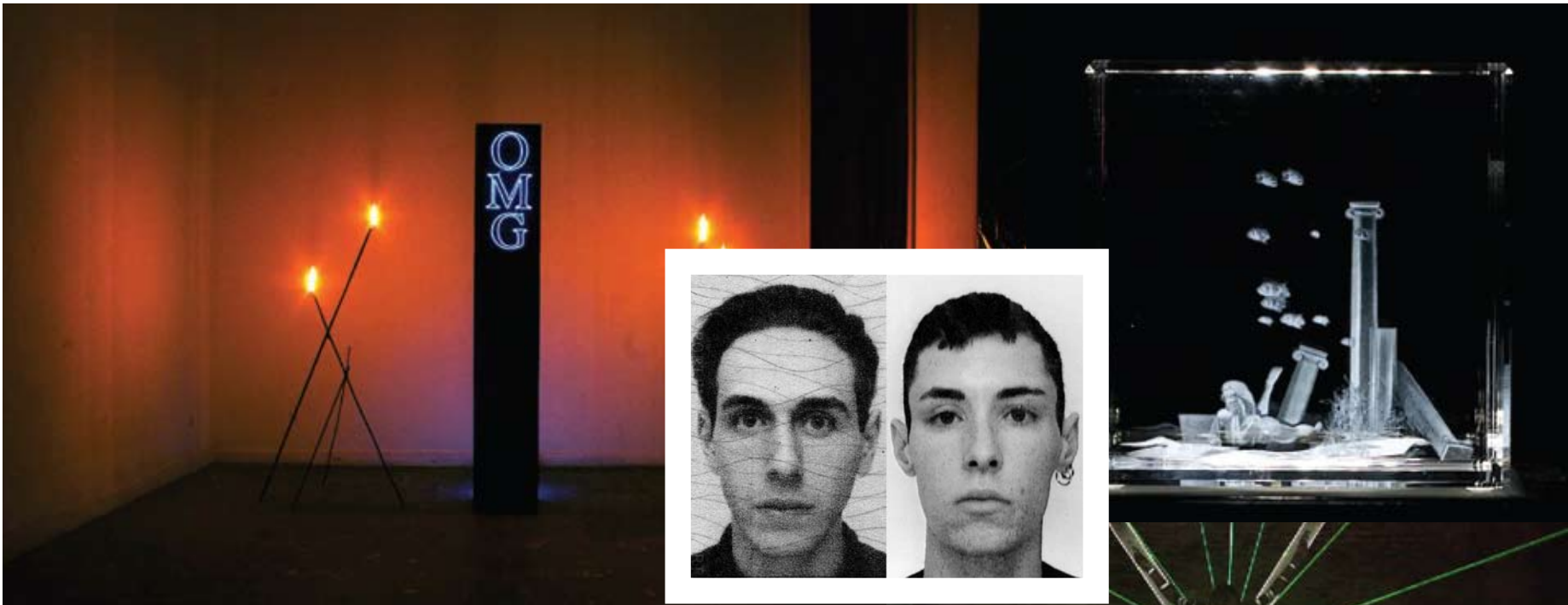
Take Pathways of the Sun, shown recently in his first solo exhibition at A Foundation in Liverpool. Suspended from the ceiling and lit from within by coloured tubes of electric light, depending on your imaginary leanings, this work resembled a fractal pattern in three dimensions, a giant ray gun or, better yet, a space satellite. Its polygons were coated in bulbous protrusions, thickly daubed in gorgeous shades of purple and orange paint. But what’s that weird smell? In spite of its fantastic appearance, the work’s primary material is nothing odder than the humble brussels sprout. “Sprouts!” Pastener enthuses. “There’s something bizarre about the everydayness, but they look very strange and otherworldly.” More surprisingly, perhaps, is that the inspiration for the

piece was a painting by the 16th-century landscape painter Breugel.

To create his highly unique artistic language, Pastener brings together references, forms and materials that don’t add up in any obvious logical way. In Cosmos, a towering figure that looks like one of Max Ernst’s surreal creatures projects a video from his head. Comprised of an everyday ladder dressed in gents clothing, the vision seemingly beamed from his brain, created from a film of a towering stack of 800 vinyl records on a turntable, is a vortex of spinning colour. Dr Nova at the Place of Dead Roads takes its title from two novels by the master of the literary cut-up, William Burroughs. Here, what looks like a rainbow Scalextric racetrack, a recurring form for Pastener, orbits upright neon tubes, topped by drills recalling those depicted by that most playful of modernists, Francis Picabia. As barmy as it sounds, the formal combination of swirls and light is winsomely graceful. “It’s about a visual pleasure,” he says.

It’s also a bit mischievous. Do the shades of Ernst or Picabia really want to find themselves on a blind date with a Scalextric track or a pair of old trousers? Making knowing use of art’s entanglement with its past, Pastener calls it “squashing together different sculptural languages into a bizarre hybrid system”. We call it a winning combination.

www.danielpasteiner.com
www.rodarton.com



anything, we hoped that the imperfections would be noticed more in reality. OMG is about conveying our feelings that faith in technological progress has supplanted traditional religious narratives.”

What had you done prior to Younger Than Jesus that caught the attention of the curators?

“I guess our work fitted the rubric the curators were going for... Also, Daniel prayed in front of the museum a few times.”

Why is it important for you to work in 3-D as well as making digital art?

“We’re more interested in it as a historical and social phenomenon rather than using computers to make electronic-media art. It’s more about the tool use and ushering in the next evolution of consciousness.”

How do the performances relate to the rest of your practice? Do you always work with the same dancer? She’s great.

“We began making performances as we were searching for a medium that we had no assumptions about, and it also fed off our cynicism towards performance art at that time. Now we realise it’s one of the most demanding mediums. Helgawretman.com, also Nik’s girlfriend, is the dancer; we work with her because she’s very good and understands what we want.”

www.aids-3d.com



RUPERT ACKROYD TURNING AWAY FROM OUTSIZE SCULPTURE AND SPANGLY MATERIALS, RUPERT ACKROYD HAS STAKED

his claim on the domestic kingdom. He’s arranged humble bedside lamps, houseplants and radio alarm clocks into elegant echoes of modernist sculptural forms. Kids’ meals have been scaled up and cast in concrete, while the almost invisible marketing strategies of bland eateries have been analysed and carefully reproduced. Ackroyd seeks out pop culture’s quieter corners, providing a cultural commentary that is as relevant as it is rigorous.

Your sculpture series Innovations from 2005 is formally very beautiful, but made from the most ordinary household items.

“They’re right on the edge of being sculpture and functional design objects. It’s called Innovations because they’re similar to the kind of low-tech items you’d find in an Innovations catalogue, like a dog bowl with a hook on it to attach your dog’s lead to. The explosion of consumables has been the history of my adulthood. Here I was interested in a sort of soft, bright and breezy aesthetic, like Argos: a class of objects that were relevant to that moment. Even now, it’s funny how it’s dated a little.”

They also include peculiar details, like little dishes of nails.

“I call them remainder pots. Everyone has them in their houses. They’re any receptacle that can take non-classifiable but slightly useful objects. It’s in between that anxious area of possession and waste.”

What made you think about using these kinds of objects?

“It was a driving for some sort of notion of the everyday and real. Instead of going outdoors into the public realm, you retreat. It’s sculpture at home.”



But you have made public sculpture – last year, in London’s Holland Park.

“This came out of the blue. It is a turkey dinosaur – Bernard Matthews’s processed turkey meat, covered in breadcrumbs – that is broken in two and realised as a big concrete sculpture. The fact that it’s a turkey transformed into one of its ancestors always struck me as quite alchemical. It’s also quite a sad, pathetic little thing. For me, that contrast of putting it in the public realm in concrete made it worthwhile.”

Your recent show in Malta, Moon Under Water, takes its title from an essay on the perfect pub by George Orwell. What’s the connection?

“The pub chain Wetherspoons took some of its founding ethos from that essay. I wanted to replicate the way chain retailers settle into an area. You rapidly accumulate localised objects to decorate your outlet. It’s a very quick, almost cack-handed look at local culture and history. You’ve got some sort of comfort for



your audience, so they’re happy to come there. It’s relying on the past as always being better, or holding some sort of value. The overall look is an extraordinary intersection of history and highly rationalised business practices.”

What did your “settling in” entail?

“I looked at that technique and used it as an equivalent of what an artist might do when working abroad. It generated things like a chandelier made from bike wheels taken from a chariot racing track down the road in this area of Malta: it’s been there for over 100 years. I included local pictures – the classic; books, which are universally comforting; local objects like guns and propellers; and a trough holding 20kg of peanuts.

www.dicksmithgallery.co.uk

Ten sculptors you should meet



TOM PRICE

THE FACIAL EXPRESSIONS OF TOM PRICE’S SCALED-DOWN SCULPTURES OF AVERAGE JOES ARE ALMOST UNREADABLE.

No outward displays of emotion animate their features. Rather, these men seem pulled inwards down convoluted paths of brain activity, compelling us to wonder: “Where’s he going? Where’s he gone?” Exquisitely realised in the manner of classical sculpture, Price’s subjects are everyday black guys who seem extraordinary only in their ordinariness. He presents them nude, with beer guts or poor posture, a couple of feet tall and fixed in bronze. “They’re not the guys you usually see naked,” notes Price, who graduated three years ago from the Royal College of Art. “At college I was among people making massive work and I was making tiny sculptures based on people who don’t make it to most art galleries. It’s about understatement.”

Like classical heroes such as Hercules with his club, Price’s men even have their own attributes. One wears a watch, another chats on his mobile, another has a snazzy pair of crocodile shoes.



However realistic they seem, though, they are not literal portraits from life. Rather, Price makes imaginative composites of the people he sees in the street and inner states he wants to conjure up. His concerns are more abstract than issues of race or class.

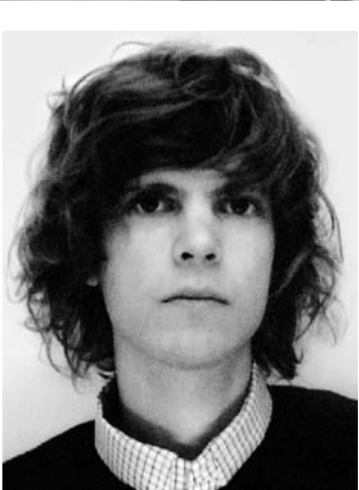
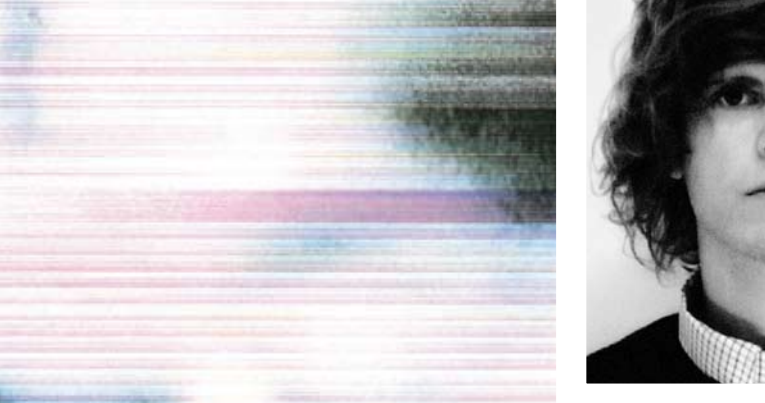
The genesis of his practice was an interest in brain chemistry: the invisible whoosh of crackling synapses. Before he ever thought about making figurative work, he was looking for ways in which he could animate spaces. An early “self-portrait”, Licked, involved a week-long performance with Price literally licking the walls of a college exhibition space, well beyond the point where his tongue



unexpectedly started to bleed. “People’s reactions made me look at them again,” he recalls. “I thought, as a site of communication, you cannot beat the human face. I really got into eye frequency, blinking, tiny expressions.”

These slight movements, which form the physical boundary to an inner universe of thought, became the focus of his first animations of clay heads, which would have to be remodelled up to 8,000 times for a single film. It was from here that he moved into traditional sculpture, slowing down thought to a single frozen moment, with each work taking up to a couple of months to complete. “A touch here or there can change everything,” he muses. “Sometimes you just want to lick a few walls.”

www.halesgallery.com



DAN COOPEY

IN THE TRADITION OF THE GREAT ENGLISH ROMANTICS, *THE NATURAL WORLD* IS WHERE DAN COOPEY FINDS INSPIRATION.

He tramps through the countryside with his camera, filming and photographing flowerbeds, hedgerows and cloud-dappled skies. But representation is a deceitful business, a ruse that’s driven artists from the Renaissance onwards. Today, no matter how advanced the technology, crisp digital images remain a universe away from the real thing. Beyond the four sides of the cramped photo or video projection, an immeasurable world flourishes. “I’ve been looking at the traditional framing of artworks and how that produces a sense of lack in images,” he explains. “I feel so frustrated in nature because it’s impossible to document.”

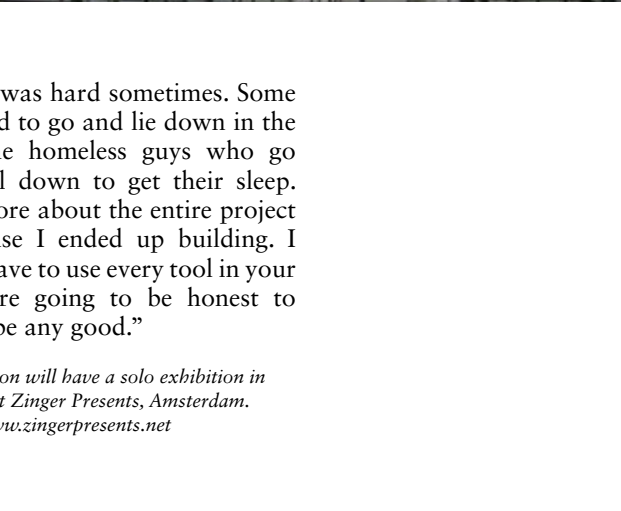
Coopey subjects this lack to rigorous examination, going through video images frame by frame. The artist’s intentions are often outdone by chance images made by printer errors or seemingly random video images. “Sometimes when I’m relaying my footage, I find stills that are so far from reality, images that could not exist without the camera,” he says. Breaking down photos to the sum of



their pigments in *Contingents*, a work that won him the BT Digital Media Award in 2004, hot pinks and fresh greens from a floral arrangement were realised as a kind of three-dimensional colour chart. The blocks of colour were rolled into shiny cylinders and stacked vertically against one another, with their curved surfaces blowing kisses of colour and light back and forth.

His recent sculpture *Hidden Sums*, a graceful combination of video projection, mirrors, fans and inflatables, goes further. Recently shown at Yinka Shonibare’s East End project space, here white silk balloons slowly rotate, catching a rainbow whirlpool of projected colour. This video is another abstraction of a country scene, with the hues of earth and sky separated out and looped around one another. By introducing light, movement and air, the work is brought back to those elements that existed in the environment where the image was originally taken. “A photograph freezes an image,” says Coopey. “This is moving it towards the natural environment.”

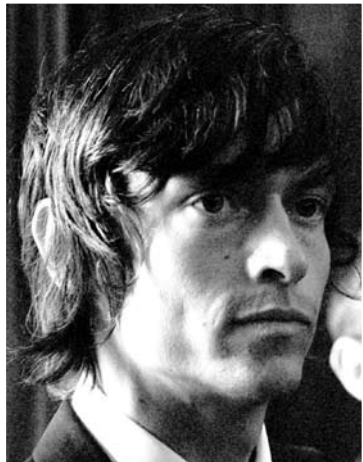
dancoopey.weebly.com



GRAHAM HUDSON MAXIMALIST MINIMALISM IS THE TERM GRAHAM HUDSON THINKS MIGHT BEST DESCRIBE HIS WORK.

His materials are the everyday junkyard finds – wooden planks and crates – that his 1960s forebears would have set in clean series, neatly placed against gallery walls. What Hudson does, however, is altogether less anal in appearance, and it's certainly a lot more exciting. For *This Sculpture Is 18m Long*, his 2007 exhibition at London's Rokeby gallery, he piled cast-off shelving and boxes into a rickety installation-cum-sculpture, theatrically lit up its nooks and crannies and gave it a soundtrack of scratched looping classical tunes played out on old record decks. Then he invited gallery goers to climb through it all. Last year, at collector Anita Zabłudowicz's 176, her London art foundation in a converted church, he erected a huge roller-coaster-like spiral tower of planks and pallets, corkscrewing its precarious way to the very top of the former nave. While at Storey Gallery in Lancaster recently, he ditched the wood and erected an immense maze of builders' scaffolding.

Why did your 18-metre sculpture look the way it did?
"I was thinking about a journey through the space. It's supposed to be landscape and a portrait of a state of mind – an expression of thinking."
What about using recycled materials?
"It began as an economic thing, but it brings in a legitimate element of chance. I want to be green, but it has to be intrinsic to the work rather than an add-on. The recent work with scaffolding in Lancaster is a really green piece because it invested in the local economy and it can be used again."



What was your plan for your tower in 176?
"To get to the top of the building with this slightly chaotic, tragicomic, collapsing thing. It housed about 20 turntables playing seven or eight operas, a fairground organ and more random things cutting through. I wanted it to sound complicated and be intuitive, chaotic – how our thinking works."
It's all scaffolding and planks – you can see the act of making.
"That the sculptures can be read as performance documentation, the live element, where the audience or I become part of it, is something I've only started thinking about recently."
For your residency at Chelsea College of Art & Design in 2006 you lived and worked on site for six months.
"This was 100% a six-month performance. It was my studio, home and

exhibition. It was hard sometimes. Some days I just had to go and lie down in the park with the homeless guys who go there and fall down to get their sleep. For me it's more about the entire project than the house I ended up building. I learned you have to use every tool in your book if you're going to be honest to yourself and be any good."

Graham Hudson will have a solo exhibition in November at Zinger Presents, Amsterdam.
www.zingerpresents.net

Ten sculptors you should meet



freshly mysterious by Vogl with ingeniously simple means. In *Small Moon* he creates his own lunar orb with nothing more than the beam from his bike's headlamp. It's not so much the moon that we're left marvelling at, but the artist's brilliant act of everyday transformation. This work first came about through a chance encounter, as he explains: "Riding my bike along a dark street one night, in a second, I saw the wall turn into a night-time panorama. My bike was no longer a bike and the next day I had to buy myself a new one." Elsewhere he has suspended "moons" from construction-site cranes, giving the impression that there is not one, but several, illuminating the cosmos.

With this kind of scope, it's no surprise that Vogl's work has been included in shows at prestigious international spaces such as Antwerp's MuHKA and London's Hayward Gallery and art events like 2008's Manifesta. His inventor's streak really comes to the fore, however, in artworks-cum-machines, often made from household gadgets. His ongoing experiments with bread and jam involve a machine that spreads the sticky conserve onto sliced white, before flipping it onto the floor. While it creates a chaotic sculpture of stodge and goo, the work also functions as an investigation into the nature of chance. "I try to create sculptures that are close to the human condition," he says. "They are trapped in their activity, a pitiable sight, but quite like life."

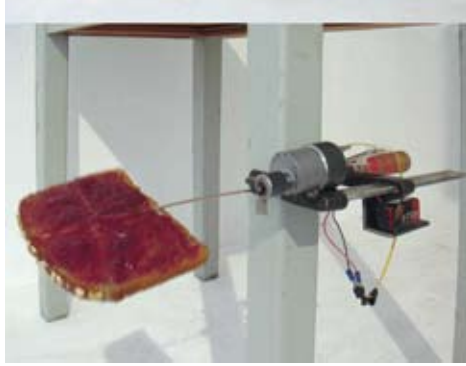
www.martinjanda.at
www.johannesvogel.com



JOHANNES VOGL HIS GRANDFATHER WAS A FARMER AND AN INVENTOR OF AGRICULTURAL MACHINES.

"I grew up in his old workshop making new constructions from the things he had left there," the 28-year-old artist recalls. This tinkerer's spirit seems essential to his sculpture, often created from what he finds on the streets around his studio. Inspired by violent May Day demonstrations in Berlin, Wolke (Cloud), for example, suspends 80 glass beer bottles from the ceiling. Attached to a motor, they spin slowly around, making for a slow shower of destruction as, one by one, they slip to the floor and smash. "I tried to freeze the moment of aggression, when hundreds of beer bottles are lifted into the air, forming a cloud of anger as the crowd decide to explode."

Giving new life to German Romanticism, the natural world is rendered



Ten sculptors you should meet



SAM PORRITT

TWO WHITE MOONS ON A SLOPE. ONE LOOKS AT THE OTHER AND SQUINTS INCREDULOUSLY.

There, in the air, hangs a third, impossible newcomer. “Who’d have thought it?” the gravity-bound globes seem to say, or perhaps they’re thinking, “Didn’t someone tell that guy that three’s a crowd?” This recent sculpture, *Going, Going, Gone*, by the young artist Sam

Porritt is made from Ikea’s basic glass lamps, on which he has drawn cartoonish faces in black marker pen. It seems a quick, even slight gesture, lent an oddly grand status by the objects’ display on a carefully made plywood plinth.

“I think a lot about speed,” says Porritt, “of reception: how long it takes to walk around things, just the mechanics of looking.” Shown as part of *Deceitful Moon*, an exhibition at London’s Hayward Gallery, lifting off with the notion that the moon landings never happened, this simply constructed work opens up myriad questions around the nature of disbelief and denial.

Those cartoon faces have cast doubt in Porritt’s work before. Their other incarnations are, largely, hastily rendered drawing-book sketches, displayed on the walls of past exhibitions, staring at his sculpture, as he puts it, “like a silent sceptic in the room”. He’s created thousands of them through the years. “I really like the prospect of a clean white sheet of paper; you can make things up over and over again.” This

might be taken as a driving principle of his sculpture also, with each new, barely able to be categorised, creation presenting a fresh site of investigation.

The hidden motivations behind philanthropy were the starting point for a work that aped the charity box, with two giant Perspex cubes, both topped with coin slots. One was filled with sugar, the other salt: identical in appearance but with very different flavours. At *The Hex*, an occasional artist-run space in a Hackney flat, he installed broken glass embedded in sand and covered by a protective glass case, both within a tabletop and in the floor by the front door, which gave the “leccy” man a fright when he came to read the meter. He’s sculpted blobby heads in plaster and covered them in bright gloss paint in an earlier three-dimensional experiment with making faces. And he’s also installed a fully functioning freestanding door in the midst of a show, like a leftover bit of scenery from some absurdist play. “I’ve worked frequently with thresholds,” he points out. “The gallery is something people travel to of their own free will. It’s a space that can slow things down, or transport you, and it’s a physical space, too. I want to make them aware of the experience they’re having.”

His artworks could be thought of as ideas in progress. They don’t offer anything as an easy as an answer, but they do compel you to think harder.

www.browngallery.co.uk



SIMON FUJIWARA
MOST OF THE OBJECTS SIMON FUJIWARA WORKS WITH *DO NOT EXIST.*

In the Berlin-based, British-Japanese artist’s writing and performance, the material world – from knick-knacks to architectural details – is given strange new life, often as the surreal victim of sexual misfire. The artist’s erotic novel *Welcome to the Hotel Munber* features a gay version of his own father, trapped in Spain during Franco’s oppressive regime, resourcefully making love to what he finds to hand – the fixtures and fittings of the family hotel. He’s even created an entire museum – dedicated to the story of *Incest* – which he’ll talk you through, floor by floor. Within the spectacular must-see of this year’s Venice Biennale, Elmgreen & Dragset’s Nordic pavilion, he created a real-life object with a story to tell. Fujiwara’s immaculate desk, besmirched by an extinguished fag butt and littered with feverishly annotated manuscript pages, gave an insight into the disturbed mindset of the pavilion’s fictitious inhabitant, a playboy whose corpse is to be seen floating in the pool outside.

Your desk in the Nordic pavilion seems both a microcosm of the entire Nordic pavilion/Elmgreen & Dragset project and a kind of mini-drama-cum-stage set in itself.

“Often I use performances to construct narratives in which objects take on new meanings, in this case erotic. As the biennale runs for several months I tried to find a way that the sculpture itself could perform without me being there. The desk is a mini replica of the pavilion, and the story presented on it describes the erotic fascination the writer has for the building he lives in, creating a mirroring of stories within stories,



buildings within buildings. Sealed in this monotony, this hermetic fiction, he is driven to do degrading, sexual things to the building. The fiction and the sculpture are so interrelated that neither can function without the other: the desk is prop, setting and character, object and subject.”

Where did the idea come from?

“When I first saw the pavilion, it looked to me like an overblown piece of Scandinavian furniture. I went to architecture school, where modernist architecture and Scandinavian design were highly fetishised because they were seen as clean, simple and forward-looking and were associated with purity and aspiration. I wanted to work against this easy reading by making it the setting for something filthy, retrograde and degenerative, with the clean concrete walls as a blank canvas for the writer’s filthy imaginings.”

In Welcome to the Hotel Munber what kind of objects does the



“father” character become erotically involved with?

“Mainly things that represent clichéd notions of Spain – wrought iron, terracotta, guitars, omelettes, sangria... The novel is set in Catalunya in the 1970s under the Franco dictatorship, so his re-appropriation of these national symbols is a kind of perverse resistance to Fascism. Paradoxically, at that time, Spain was undergoing a massive branding exercise to make it Europe’s tourist capital. I wanted the sexualised objects to embody this paradox – they are the clichéd tourist image of Spain and yet they betray a suppressed erotic yearning.”

How has your interest evolved from sculpture to storytelling?

“In the beginning I was making standalone sculptures that had, in my head, numerous associations, narratives and anecdotes that tended to overload them with meanings that were not always visible. I realised that I had started to enjoy discussing my work more than making it, which is when I thought, ‘Well, maybe this is the work – talking about it.’”

www.neuealtebruecke.com