

Paul Graham

Anthony Reynolds

Four years ago Paul Graham produced 'Beyond Caring', a book of photographs of dispirited people in social security offices — straight photojournalism. Then came 'Troubled Land', photographs of Northern Ireland that appeared to belong unproblematically to the landscape tradition. But attention revealed evidence of the British military presence — a helicopter flying over green fields, a Union Jack stuck in the crown of a tree, a checkpoint nestling amongst hedgerows. The imagery subtly encapsulated the notion of daily life disrupted by conflict and of the tradition of an unspoiled rural idyll invaded by political reality. These new photographs, taken in Europe and presented mainly as diptychs and triptychs, move a step further away from photojournalism. The dialogue set up between pictures seeks to address the presence and weight of history. Franco's grave is covered with globules of spit; a star of David has been scratched on a sculpture in Berlin; the image of Hitler has been erased from a poster in Amsterdam. The statements are precise, explicit and self-contained. More vexed are their connections with companion images of a laughing Spanish woman; a man staring at the sky and a girl sitting in a Munich disco; a beer drinker in a Munich Hofbrauhaus and a bottle of stain remover in an Amsterdam kitchen. Symbolic narratives are created by means of juxtapositions imposed by the artist, not discovered in the world — and since fables are less convincing than facts, this is a primary weakness.

Sarah Kent



Valerio Adami

Edward Toteh Gallery

The Italian painter Adami once published a newspaper advertisement asking readers to 'Send me an Image'. It would be wrong to think that all subject matter in his enigmatic work stems from such a random method of acquisition, though his artistic gondola has long been afloat on the sea of consciousness with the artist perched on the gunwale ready to harpoon chance ideas that surface from down below. The marriage of pleasure and violence characterises paintings that deal with grand historical ideas in cypher form. What should one make of '1919-1938' which shows a nude female figure, apparently representing Europe, in sexual union with a mechanistic-looking male? Is Europe being raped or bugged as she rests her arms on images of the classical past, or does she participate cheerfully in what seems to be the picture's theme — the triumph of petty nationalism? Should we take this canvas as a warning or simply lie back and enjoy these Caulfield-like fields of reverberating colour? An observer of life's grand panorama, Adami expresses no emotion in the elegant, neo-mannerist riddles that he offers the viewer — spaces where the mind can form its own imagery.

Robert Macdonald

Songlines; paintings from the Balgo hills and Portraits from an Uninhabited Land

Rebecca Hossack

'Songlines', the mythical and physical tracks that connect the water holes and sacred sites of the aboriginal people of Australia, tell of creation and must be sung into existence. They are movingly described in the late Bruce Chatwin's fine book of the same name. Similarly the paintings of intricate pointillist designs map the mystical symbiosis between people and land. In the upper gallery sophisticated painting, using bright acrylic colour on canvas instead of more traditional muted tones, continues to draw on these age-old forms whilst attempting to find relevance with the art world. Even more interesting than the paintings is a remarkable series of photographs of the Balgo people by the young English photographer Nicolas Adler. Many suffer from blindness due to a vitamin deficiency brought on by being forced to abandon their traditional diet. With his makeshift 'bush studio' Adler has caught, in classic black and white poses, something of the innocent vulnerability and proud defiance of these ancient people who have wished only to be left alone.

Sue Hubbard.

