

Fresh Art

BUSINESS DESIGN CENTRE

It is difficult to determine the function of this jamboree. Some 40 art schools have taken stands to exhibit a selection of works by graduates and postgraduates. If the purpose is educational — a way of soliciting students — the event takes place at the wrong time of year: candidates make their applications in March. If the purpose is to sell work and promote students to dealers, it would make sense to limit the show to postgraduates, more ready to be launched as fully-fledged artists. On the strength of this showing, Bath emerges as the best school in the country — Goldsmiths and the Slade being amongst those who stayed away — with Leeds and Liverpool also creating a lively presence. Installations on the gallery by Rachel Limbrick and Nicholas Bernard, from the Polytechnic of East London, provide welcome relief from the competing visuals below. A nightingale bursts into song above the nest that Limbrick has tucked into the rafters. Holes drilled into a solid partition allow a line of twinkling lights to 'draw' the drill with which Bernard made the holes. Caroline Sheehan, from Polytechnic South West, shows a laser print of a vase of flowers and a lamp with an ill-fitting shade. Montaged on to the vase are views of old cottages, and accompanying the work is a quotation describing the solitude of rural life whose 'loneliness drove women to jump

into the sea'. The image is permeated by unease created by the heightened colour and the ill-matched objects — at once both monumental and banal. Winner of the Peter Kinley Prize is Jo Nash from Bath, who creates a Cinemascope scene of arriving cavalry from a sheet of roofing felt tacked to the wall with a grid of nails, a neat mixture of realism and fantasy. Also worth searching out is Rachel Atherton from Stoke, who hones in on a Gainsborough, eliminates the figures and reinterprets the landscape with wilful abandon.

Sarah Kent



Andrew Logan

FLOWERS EAST

Andrew Logan has an enthusiastic following among camp glitterati for his mirrored fantasies, but I find them too ham-fisted, banal and repetitive to spark off flights of imaginative fancy. One might have expected some finesse to have entered the oeuvre, but the brooches of broken mirror that amused me with their tackiness ten years ago are as heavy and crude as ever. The question is, at what point does kitsch become art? One answer must surely be when it is sufficiently well designed and made, and Logan scores low on both counts. His giant-sized Zandra Rhodes, undulating in the wind like an Indian dancer, has none of the requisite grace, subtlety or wit. More successful are the grotesquely baroque items of furniture. Two giant

arum lilies give off sound from a record player hidden in the mirrored mound beneath; light shines from a third gargantuan blossom. One could imagine this monstrous regiment in the distressed décor of a hairdressing salon alongside Logan's pyramidal shelf of mirrors adorned with Buddhas and glass stupas. Some of his celebrity mirrors succeed because the 'drawing' is better. Lenin's features are cleverly rendered with pieces of mirror, and Scarlett's nose is reduced to a single, iconic line. Most successful, though, are a series of life-sized portrait busts. A good likeness of Scarlett is topped with a mound of pink mirror hair; Divine appears in masculine and drag versions, and in a golden mask. Logan's forte seems, ironically, to lie in direct realism rather than the heavy-handed fantasy he has pursued for so long.

Sarah Kent

Aboriginal Bark Paintings

REBECCA HOSSACK

Despite being the oldest continuing art form in the world, aboriginal art is now in danger, as young aborigines are

drawn to the tackier fringes of Western society and its illusory goals. This exhibition of bark paintings from Yirrkala Dhanbul is the most comprehensive to be seen in London since the show organised by David Attenborough in 1963. Most Westerners have come to associate aboriginal art with the pointillist abstraction of paintings from the western desert, but these beautiful works use stylised images of native fauna to depict ancient stories and rituals that describe the creation of the universe. Natural ochre and chalk pigments mixed with orchid juice and plant resins are applied with chewed sticks and brushes of human hair. The Yongli artist does not judge his work by Western standards. Creativity is not valued, the artist being the medium through which ancient 'dreamings' are reproduced. A work is judged by the spiritual or ancestral power embodied in its 'brilliance' — variations of intensity in the hatched sections. As leading artists like Hamish Fulton and Richard Long explore the metaphorical and spiritual resonance of the walk or journey, it seems that Westerners are slowly arriving at the place that the aborigines have inhabited psychologically for millennia.

Sue Hubbard



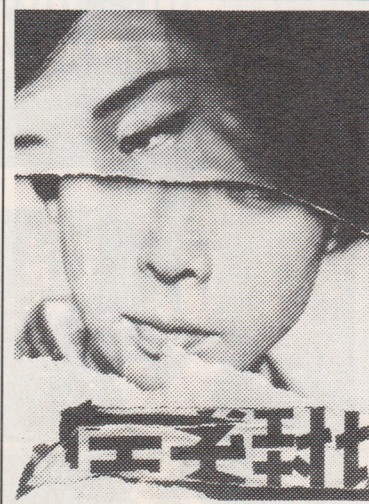
Nick Pearson

CENTRAL SPACE

'While the image represents a performance taking place in an indeterminate space, the whole adds up to a sign system which refers to, yet is divorced from its referent.' My heart sinks when I read this kind of stuff. Tell us about your life, your holiday, your dog; but please, no more about the tedious split of 'sign' from 'referent'! Leaving aside these airy nothings, Nick Pearson actually paints sportsmen and circus acrobats in dark silhouette against vivid colour. Sometimes the silhouette is spread over two or three adjoining panels, with a panel of pure colour slotted in to make a rectan-

gular whole; sometimes his figures are drawn over just one panel with a long strip underneath painted in vivid scrawls and graffiti-esque hieroglyphs, like a caption that can't be read. What to make of all this? The strategy — pick 'n' mix juxtaposition of different art 'systems' — is nothing new, yet Pearson brings a certain deftness to the genre. In one work an acrobat does a handstand on a highwire, while the caption beneath reads as a series of digital noughts, like a stopwatch. But the numbers are partly obliterated — fading, as if the athlete had beaten the clock, exploded time. In art, as in the circus, the trick is not to look down.

Rose Jennings



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