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In a brisk sunny London afternoon I make my way in front of a seemingly abandoned house. I have been invited to a private view of POMP, a new temporary exhibition born from a collaboration between Simon Poole's Osterly and artist Timothy Holt. "It cannot be," I tell myself looking at the decrepit construction in front of me, wondering if I have yet again fallen victim of my bad sense of direction. "An art exhibition here?" My bewilderment, stemming from numerous visits to white-cube-type galleries and grand museums, is dissipated by the figure of Mr. Poole now standing on the front step and inviting me to start exploring the show. I am therefore led into a dark corridor and suddenly have the sensation of having entered the virtual reality of one of those video games in which the player roams a desolated planet earth, fallen victim to a disease outbreak of sort, trying to survive and save the few human beings left. However, I am quickly brought back to reality, or perhaps transported to another world entirely, by the sight of extraordinary art works standing out from the skeleton of the forsaken building.



Graham Clemie, *Existentialism II*, 2016. Wood, polyester film, acrylic, LED sign, battery, sand, 103 x 181 x 79 cm. Courtesy: the artist. Photo: Graham Clemie.

The first piece I lay my eyes on is a T-shaped structure whose mirroring surface reflects my image back to me as I stand right in front of it. The words "reality is too fake" scroll down the LED sign assembled in Graham Clemie's *Existentialism II*'s upper portion. Ironically, a brief conversation with the artist himself unveils that the quote comes from a documentary about video game addiction (which I later find out to be *Web Junkie* by filmmakers Shosh Shlam and Hilla Medalia). While my mind lingers among the implications of these counterintuitive words and of the significance of my reflection, as well as Mr. Poole's, in the piece, I notice another work of art placed right behind us on the floor of the next room. As the meticulous information hand-out given to me by Mr. Holt informs me, this is Richard Ducker's *Dark Matter*, a creation whose black hue belongs to the general palette of the peculiar venue yet the perfection of its sharp geometric edges make it stand out from the devastated "imperfect" environment. A glimpse of red swiftly catches my attention as I enter yet another room. Alice Steffen's *The Woman of Chelsea*, emerges from its dimly-lit niche. The plant-like elements, consisting of fake red nails, eyelashes and diamantes stem out of piles of black glitter placed on the floor.



Richard Ducker, *Dark Matter 6*, 2011. Compressed polystyrene, resin, black flock, 70 x 60 x 150 cm. Courtesy: the artist. Photo: Samantha Wheelwright.

Still astonished by the amount of time and patience that assembling such a visually stunning display must have taken; I adventure upstairs where I encounter Catriona Robertson's *Connected*. As the artist herself explains to me, the process of creation of this art work was quite lengthy and complex. Nevertheless, the three perfectly-shaped blocks of cement linked by wires that constitute it display exceptional simplicity of form, which matches the austerity of the room in which it is shown. This is a perfect example of a general characteristic observed in the exhibition: the ability of the artists to show works that in an almost mysterious way seem to be inherent to the venue. The collaboration of artists and curators (Timothy Holt, Cat Madden and Amy Turnbull) has produced here a brilliant show in which a harmonious relation can be observed both among the different objects and between each object and its location. While the precious artwork stands out in contrast with the humble nature of the setting, it contemporarily seems to be an integral part of it, as if the artists' creations had always been there since the house was built.

This interesting interplay of venue and object is yet again evident in Patrick Colhoun's *Inherited Addiction (Various)*. In this case elements made of colourful ceramic and held together by hosiery compose the upper half of a repeated human head, seemingly ascending (or descending) from the floorboards. A mirror leaning on a wall doubles the impact of the piece. While observing the deaf and mute (because ears and mouths were not moulded on them) elements, Clare Mitten's *YMMF II* catches my attention. The combination of 2D and 3D elements and the melange of not only media but also techniques (painting, collage, sculpture) bring to life a set of gears which unite to form a machine-looking object whose nature is not clear to me, yet I am almost convinced it might suddenly be activated and start moving.

The adjacent building, Safehouse 1, also emanates an aura of abandonment and hosts another set of thought-provoking art works. As we walk through the door, Mr. Poole and I are immediately attracted to Ben Woodeson and *Hangover*. Two imposing sheets of brass hang in the open space linking the ground and first floors. One is held in position by a strap of (*Omni Directional*), the other appears to have been gently placed on one of the wooden beams belonging to the skeleton of the dilapidated house. I allow myself to playfully experiment with the changes in my reflection into the brass sheets as I move around them, almost matching my movements to the sound of Graham Hudson's *100 Iso - F2.0 - 1_160s* playing from the front of the house, as now the sun is setting, illuminating with its lights the whole space. I cannot help but notice that, despite their significant size, Woodeson's sculptures radiate a sense of grace and serenity which, once again, suggests the idea that they might have been here all along in a house built around them, for them.



POMP, workshops with education facilitator Phoebe Gardiner, 2016. Photo: Timothy Holt.

As I enter a much darker zone towards the back of the building, I am met by Rebecca Moss' *Experiments in Flying and Falling* playing on a TV screen in a continuous loop. In the compilations of videos she explores artificial materials mostly within the context of natural settings through quasi-scientific procedures. It seems quite fitting that there would be a piece dedicated to analysing materials, considering that the whole exhibition appears to be, among other things, an experimentation with materials of every sort. Amy Stephens' sculptures, *Ilmenite City (Series)*, *Trigonal*, and *Sand* are indeed a great example of this very concept. Made of powder coated stainless steel and other components, they assume geometric shapes, reminding me of futuristic cities that could fit well in a science fiction (or perhaps another video game?) scenario, an effect which is nothing but amplified by their shadows cast on the walls of the first floor.

Last but not least I come into a room at which I had only glanced on my way up from the ground floor. Here I find myself in a narrow elongated room with a few seemingly innocuous black plastic bags. As I ponder on the possible meaning of the installation, a young lady "activates" the bags which start roaming the room as if on wheels. The other viewers and I take just a moment to recover from the surprise and where before there was mostly silence and concentration, there is now lively chatter, as if the animation of Timothy Holt's *Bags for Life* had awakened us as well. Indeed, perhaps this is the art work with which I observed more people interact, to the point that even a couple of children started running after the bags, changing their trajectory, and laughing all the while.

On this note, I would like to point out one of the features that render this exhibition innovative. While in most instances I have witnessed art shows are reserved for a selected few and, in the case of contemporary art specifically, are often branded by many as a hipster alternative to traditional forms of social and cultural activities, this exhibition was designed by its organisers to welcome anybody and to be a chance for exploration, reflection and education. In fact, I am told that Phoebe Gardiner conducted workshops for POMP that saw the participation of people of any age. This is of course not to criticise more conventional art venues, which also offer educational opportunities. What I mean is that it is a pleasure to see that a significant effort was made to render art and particularly contemporary art which is unfortunately often conceived as perhaps too cryptic or enigmatic for the larger crowds to appreciate it, truly attainable to all regardless of their pre-existing knowledge or experience of art itself.

Having been lucky enough to see the show, I can honestly say that it was refreshing to see something new and different. After all, the art world has always progressed throughout histories thanks to the visionary ideas of artists and art professionals who dared to create something new. It is my belief that this type of innovation took place in POMP. The curators, the artists and Osterly (which helped fund the project) all came together to create a unique experience, rendered even rarer by the limited time window during which it was available. The choice of such an atypical and, dare I say it, whimsical venue, in ironic contrast yet perfectly complementing the title of the show, was essential in differentiating this display from any other and highlighting the works presented in it. Both the individual and collective display of the art pieces truly augmented the overall impact of POMP.

The idea to create a "mobile" gallery on which Holt and Poole are working is extraordinary and might revolutionise the way we conceive of experiencing art. They are redirecting the public's attention from the white-cube-type gallery, which although for certain aspects effective and once considered innovative has now become the standard to be transcended, to venues deemed unlikely up to now. This might have a double effect of shocking (whether it is a positive or negative way) the art aficionados crowd while at the same time democratising, in a sense, the display of art. In other words, this new project might render the art works more unique, in the sense that they would be displayed in a determined place for only a certain amount of time, but at the same time more attainable to anybody considering that a show might pop-up in the most unexpected places. When I avidly ask both Holt and Poole "what next?" I am reassured that they might surprise us with a new project in the near future. I can honestly say, I cannot wait to see with what they will amaze us this time.

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