

Reviews

John Kørner

★★★★★
Victoria Miro East End

There's a strong feeling of folklore, fantasy and fairytale about Danish artist John Kørner's paintings. Mainly set against bright yellow backgrounds, his cast of objects, motifs and characters merge and morph in rainbow-coloured arrangements of dribbling and bleeding brushmarks. Some areas of canvas suggest little more than a faceless, hand-less figure, before his brush appears to veer off into an abstract pattern of lines and blobs.

Kørner also extends his work into three dimensions. In the project room – painted in the same intense yellow – a male and female figure from his paintings are translated into half-formed, life-sized painted ceramics, here with a crocodile latched onto the man's right arm.

Both in subject matter and painterly surface, the obvious comparison to make is with gallery stablemate Peter Doig – in fact if he were real, the top-hatted figure who has appeared in Doig's paintings could almost be the same man in Kørner's world – although his primary-coloured palette and abstract style make the Dane's paint-



'27 Problems', 2006

ings even harder to fathom. The title of this show is '2006 Problems', but whether Kørner's characters are illustrating the artist's problems for us to solve or just debating them amongst themselves

remains wide open. It's almost as if by stimulating the eye with exciting but indecipherable visual information, Kørner is somehow freeing up the associations of the mind. *Helen Stampler*

Cyprien Gaillard

★★★★★
Laura Bartlett Elsewhere

A grandiose, clanking cinema projector noisily belts out a grainy, 35mm-film of a forest beyond the crumbling balustrade of an old French chateau. As if in slow motion, a billowing cloud of white smoke erupts from the central tree, infecting its branches with fungal-like spores. The secret behind Cyprien Gaillard's 'Real Remnants of Fictive Wars' involves some carefully harnessed tree climbers handling spewing fire extinguishers from within the foliage – an anecdotal stuff perhaps – but vital to the understanding of a series of essentially vandalistic, performative endeavours. This virulent act of

plein air graffiti seems all the more quaint for its bourgeois setting and (like the brutalist blocks of flats that rise from his meticulous copies of seventeenth-century Dutch landscape etchings in the upstairs gallery) is somehow muted by its association with a bygone era of high classicism.

The understated theme of disaffected youth continues in 'Geographical Analogies', a display of out-on-location Polaroids stacked in repeating diamond formations. The link between Parisian-style burnt-out cars and endless desert is not immediately forthcoming, but Gaillard's entropic project – to equate urban decay with more natural forms of erosion – plays itself out neatly enough. One might think a clash between the ban-



'Belief in the Age of Disbelief', 2006

lieue and the bucolic to be altogether pedestrian, yet his vision of a spoiled idyll is surprisingly satisfying. *Ossian Ward*

Patrick Tuttofuoco

★★★★★
Hauch of Venison West End

The neologism Chindia refers to the combined economic might of China and India, two countries visited recently by young

Italian artist Patrick Tuttofuoco as part of a tour of 17 of the world's fastest-growing cities. He has woven his experiences into a number of slippery, collaborative enquiries into shifting global dynamics, and – judging by this multi-

media assault (also called 'Chindia') – there's every chance the project could run and run, gathering layers of reference as the artist earns air miles.

Caught between frenetically paced tourism – everywhere starting to look the same – and a desire to distil his experiences, Tuttofuoco revisits the past (the playful, Pop-inspired visions of Archigram seem particularly influential), while pointing optimistically towards altered forms of cultural production. Covering one wall, 'Open Range' is a fantastical cityscape collaged from Tuttofuoco's photographs. To complement this, he has distilled the architectural absurdities of Shanghai, Beijing, Delhi and Mumbai into a quartet of sculptures. Their ridiculous presence might be interpreted as irony, but Tuttofuoco's position seems entirely to be one of enthusiasm and embrace, encapsulated by the final work – a photograph of a Chinese woman and an Indian man sharing a kiss. *Martin Coomer*



'Open Range', 2006

Private view

Mhairi Vari

Office workers staring down from their windows on to the Economist Plaza could be forgiven for thinking that their eyes were playing tricks on them. At the foot of the building artist Mhairi Vari has installed her first public work, 'Relief', which appears, from a distance, to be a round tea bag resting on top of a square arrangement of 49 plastic cups. Up close, however, the cups are revealed to be dust bin-sized containers and the tea bag is a 1.7m-diameter construction of bronze mesh, filled with 12kg of tea.

'I'm a big tea drinker so the thought of producing an outdoor sculpture for this space made me think about office workers taking a tea break', Vari explains. 'And a lot of my work involves that play of scale – from the macro to the micro – and an inversion of materials and function. The bronze net is made from a substance used in paper making – so I am taking an industrial version of a traditional art medium and using it to make a functional domestic object.'

When it rains, Vari's work actually produces tea in the containers beneath. 'It's partly an interest in experiments with unknown outcomes, as well as in scientific theories, which have the possibility of being proved wrong and replaced by something else.'

Before studying art, in Birmingham and then at London's Royal Academy schools, Vari spent ten years in the theatre, both as a performer and a designer, perhaps accounting for the theatricality in her work. Her previous sculptures include a landscape using sacks of building sand into which were stuck thousands of coloured felt-tipped pens. Over each exposed pen nib Vari placed a small paper house. 'For the duration of the exhibition the colour leaked out on to the houses creating something which appeared almost fungal', Vari says. 'I like things that shift and change.'

As Vari's tea bag sculpture reacts to the elements, the containers beneath fill with the tea in various shades of brown, before evaporating and then refilling again. So far no-one's been tempted to drink the tea. 'Not only is it cold but there's going to be a lot of copper in it from the bronze mesh', she warns. 'I wouldn't recommend it'. *Interview: Helen Stampler. 'Relief' is showing at the Economist Plaza until January 12 2007 (See West End listings).*



The artist with her work and a cup of tea

Art