

Art

MONTHLY

APRIL 2013 | No 365 | UK £4.80 US \$7.40

Michelangelo Pistoletto

Interviewed by Alex Coles

Life and Death

Paul O'Kane

Identity Crisis

Maja & Reuben Fowkes

Duchamp et al

Mark Harris

COMMUNISM

never

happened

first instantiation, this substantial show makes Gladwell's wider range and ambitions clear. It is all new work and the display will change over the coming months – driven by Gladwell's interest in flux, even if the run length doubles as a pragmatic response to the current funding environment. On the roof, *Mini Ramp Intersection*, 2013, may well make youth culture more visible than it has ever been in the retirement capital of Bexhill. Gladwell has installed a skating ramp, complete with an outer net which references cage fighting and the Mad Max cycle of films (which he has often mined), while also serving to theatricalise the conflicts likely between BMX users and skateboarders as they compete for space in a cruciform design which encourages clashes in the middle. This might have come across as an architecturally controlled zone, but any hints of Dan Graham were countered by its immediate popularity with local teenagers and the impromptu irregular additions which the structure had required to prevent strong coastal winds from blowing it away.

Downstairs, the 20-minute film *Jack in the Green (Lambretta-AGS 195 to Triumph-GVL2MXD)*, 2013, follows a motorcyclist heavily camouflaged as a tree – in line with the folklore figure celebrated in nearby Hastings every spring. Initially, Jack in the Green rides a mod scooter, but exchanges that for a rocker's bike halfway through. The track narrows and the Sussex woods take on jungle-like qualities as darkness falls, bringing a touch of Joseph Conrad as well as Mad Max to the tracing of a line through landscape and gallery.

A separate room houses *Broken Dance (Beatboxed)*, 2012. This broadens the cyclical conflicts of will from the local history of mods and rockers to a 'battle' between a sequence of beat-boxers (stunningly imaginative users of the voice as percussion) on one wall and urban dancers opposite. The viewer is stuck in the middle, trying to work out the causality behind their to and fro.

Planet and stars sequence (Hastings Pier), 2013, the latest in a round-the-world sequence started in 2001, calls to mind Hans Namuth's documentation of Pollock. Gladwell films himself kneeling on the ground in a gas mask and gloves as he makes rapid-fire spraycan paintings of outer space using locally sourced packaging as his stencils. He concludes by almost obliterating the image in black paint, echoing the inevitable over-painting of graffiti. Here, though, an otherworldly beauty is retained in the nine-section diamond formation displayed alongside the video, shot under the Victorian cast iron substructure of Hastings' burnt-out Victorian pier.

Gladwell's underlying strategies remain consistent: he gives gallery goers access to alternative cultures of anthropological interest;

he provides performance spectacle; he relates that to the parallel performances – be that in the making of work or the networks which surround its presentation – of the art world. If structuralism at its simplest is 'the quest for the invariant elements among superficial differences' (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Myth and Meaning*, 1978), then the breadth of this presentation makes Gladwell something of a latter-day practitioner. He draws unexpected parallels between the actions, myths and rituals of urban, indigenous, cinematic and art-historical cultures – and proves the raw to be more subtly cooked than we might have expected. Just as recession points up social divisions, Gladwell provides a compelling and timely reminder of our commonality: always changing, always conflicted, always the same. ■

PAUL CAREY-KENT is a freelance writer based in Southampton.

Hayley Newman and Emily Speed: The Practice of Space

Castlefield Gallery Manchester 1 March to 7 April

Space is a nebulous concept. It is also the first frontier: we are always in a space of some sort, always in some kind of headspace, too, and accordingly the subject is hard and intangible and ubiquitous enough to write about that the few texts which do persuasively anatomise and unpick our relation to it, like Gaston Bachelard's lengthy *The Poetics of Space* and Georges Perec's brief *Species of Spaces*, have become grist for supposedly space-minded artists' press releases and catalogue essays over and over – as here. (I've done it too.) But how does one practice space?

Hayley Newman and Emily Speed's artworks, we're told, 'consider the body in space and depict a bodily understanding of spaces'. So here's one kind of spatiality: the nightlife into which Newman is about to launch herself, in her 28-minute video *Night Life of the Jewellery*, 2002, after being bedecked with every item of bling in a jewellery shop. Her fingers fill up with rings, her arms are positively bandaged with bangles and her throat adornment would make Mr T jealous. It is pretty boring to watch this going on and maybe the tiresomeness of conforming to female type so emphatically is partly the point, since nearby are Newman's paired photographs *The Volcano Lady*, 2005, in one of which the artist – in puffy, layered clothing – cavorts against a painted backdrop (foot on the shutter release), while in the other, she performs a handstand to flip her dress upside down, revealing its interior as fiery red and tasselled. As it forms a cone over her inverted upper body and her red-clad legs v-shape outwards, Newman becomes – as she has said was the aim – a kind of eroticised human Vesuvius.

In each of these works, one might say that an idea of femininity (adornment, demureness) is impolitely hijacked and exaggerated or reversed. Established boundaries and roles vex Newman, it would seem. *Domestic*, 2010-13, is a wall of 30-odd donated cloths – chamois rags, pub glass cloths, tea towels – holey with use but fixed up in anthropomorphic fashion by the artist: appliquéd with red sequin lips, and with stitching and fake pearls around holes making eyes and mouths. They are abject, lachrymose and comical, these gladdened rags, and fold together three stages of work: first, that of making them (according to Tracey Warr, author of the show's accompanying text, Newman has performed with one of these over her face, referencing 'the nameless, faceless people labouring in sweatshops where the cloths are made'); second, the effort that wears them out; third, the time-consuming job of restoring them.

Shaun Gladwell
BMX Channel 2013
video



It is seemingly no accident that these blue-collar works, suggesting money never made easily, sit close to the white-collar (and white-collar crime) inferences of *Histoire Economique*, 2013, Newman's rubbings from the facades of London banks on ripped-open envelopes from banks and financial services organisations, which sardonically reveal the rich architectural textures built into them, as if they were grand palaces. Her issue appears to be less with space than with fixed fronts, as is suggested by pages from her book-in-progress *Facadism*, 2013-, whose short fictions tabulate types of false frontages including rundown buildings rehabbed in advance of TV cameras covering a marathon, a frozen palsied face, and two people making flirtatious faces across a room. What it adds up to is a kind of 360° discontent at social roles – space as the hole a peg goes into – and immutable inequality, a plaint that starts off as unremarkable and assumes a patched-together diagnostic force.

Newman and Speed meet not only in 'space' but on the plane of the knowingly outlandish. In *Body/Building*, 2013, Speed draws physical bodies all but obscured by muscular sections of architecture, as if wearing them: tiered arches, a lumbering dome, a truncated column etc, all become outfits, unwieldy and paradoxically attention-getting protections/disguises for the artist (who, merging herself with objects like Newman, in a previous performance moved haphazardly through Linz, Austria, wearing a self-blinding cardboard architecture). What Speed really appears interested in, though, is a quality of precarity, of fleeting balance preceding likely collapse, concerning the intersection of bodies and bricks.

In *Build-Up*, 2013, a casual-looking arrangement of propped hardboard sheeting and what appear to be modified metal frames for tables serves as the itchy, uneven site for a screened video in which acrobats in Manchester's half-century-old 'Toast Rack' building construct human pyramids and support each other in various ways by ingenious counterweighting. What becomes explicit is not just what the bodies are doing but that they are effectively slicing through space, striking temporary attitudes that will inevitably come undone. In this regard, it is perhaps not irrelevant that the Toast Rack, used by students of Manchester Metropolitan University, was last year declared 'unfit for purpose'. Space, we are reminded, is constantly in progress. The body that hides in architecture won't do so permanently.

Perhaps the most resonant works in the whole show, however, are the most easily overlooked: Speed's *Stacked*, 2013, an odd little watercolour of a fragment of architecture drawn high on one of the walls (with a pair of bright-red plastic binoculars placed pointedly nearby), and her *Wedged*, 2013, a stack of cast plaster wedges in colours modulating from white to black that collapse two scales – they look like door wedges but their casting imprints them with tiny bricks – and are positioned on a shelf and prevented from falling by a sliver of balsa wood jutting up from another shelf below. Under such auspices, these become abstracted pseudo-buildings that won't last. Speed's



Emily Speed
Build-Up 2013
video

work doesn't lay itself out as clearly as her co-exhibitor's: what it builds up to is a poetic fug of anxieties about being in space, being amid architecture and feeling that neither you nor it will abide, that your hiding place is not safe and that hiding causes its own problems. One might see the two practices, to this extent, as being in useful conversation: Newman articulating things to abhor and maybe flee from, Speed finding fearful cracks in the refuge. ■

MARTIN HERBERT is a critic based in Tunbridge Wells.

Alice Channer: Invertebrates

Hepworth Wakefield 16 February to 12 May

During her pre-opening talk and tour for 'Invertebrates', British mixed-media sculptor Alice Channer explained the exhibition space's irregular geometry. It was, she said, a room 'without right angles'. The curious side-effect of this design was that it made the gallery tricky to visualise, disabling her method of recalling locations from memory to notionally place works before installation. Despite or perhaps because of this resistance to mental fixity, the relationship between art, walls, floor and gallery expanse in 'Invertebrates' is handled with complete control. Being unable to keep an image of the empty exhibition in mind has, rather unexpectedly, served Channer well. There is a fully considered interplay between the collection of works – comprising metals, textiles, marble and lumps of concrete, all made this year specifically for the Hepworth – and its surroundings. Moreover, Channer's intellectual effort, her attempt to hold, measure and manipulate the elusive Hepworth locale in mind, has yielded an atmosphere of ludic virtuosity; a mood one suspects is only possible with an artist in total command of a given space.

Andrew McDonald All That Comes Between Us

23 March – 11 May 2013

Solo show of recent work.

GRUNDY
Art Gallery Blackpool

Queen Street, Blackpool, FY1 1PU
www.grundyartgallery.com t:01253 478170

Admission Free
Open Mon-Sat 10am-5pm. Closed Sundays.
Open Bank Holidays: 23rd Mar, 1st Apr and 6th May, 11-4pm

ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND

Blackpool Council