

Time Out

LONDON'S WEEKLY LISTINGS BIBLE
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London



**FRIEND
OR
FOE?**

Reviews

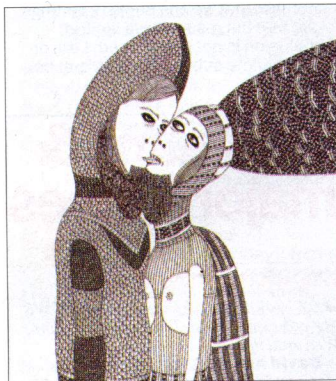
Laylah Ali

★★★★★
InIVA East

Laylah Ali's precisely drawn but borderline-cartoonish figures rarely have fewer than three emotions flitting across their features at any time. This one, with cascading hair, girlish eyes, buckteeth, a big moustache and a beard that looks knitted, is excited, fearful and obscurely angry. That one, armless and with a similarly handicapped daughter strapped to her, looks scared and resolute and nostalgic. Beached on white backgrounds, they wear compound costumes – a funky fusion of chainmail, feathered headresses and what Ali calls 'the headgear of the Catholic hierarchy'. They're not quite people, not quite stereotypes either, but escorts for the viewer into a space where interaction with a depicted other is made problematic.

Schisms also flare across the drawings themselves. One repeated motif is a couple kissing: within three drawings the couple mutates – swapping gender, gaining scarification marks, switching roles between submissive and domineering – and you never see the pair at peace, in love. (The obvious template is Klimt's 'The Kiss'.) This is less strident stuff, even in a suite of bright little gouaches, than admirers of

Ali's blazingly sorrowful paintings might anticipate: no overt, sardonically childlike expositions of man's inhumanity to man here. Instead she prowls around violence's root: a fundamental disconnection between people that is the handmaiden of cruelty on all kinds of scales. A comparison of the two registers might have been more powerful; while this truncated display eloquently clarifies why InIVA needs the larger premises it will move into this summer, and why Ali should have had the inaugural show. *Martin Herbert*



Untitled from 'The kiss and other warriors'

Latitude

★★★★★
Fieldgate Gallery East End

London is the second stop for this group show which, having premiered in Minneapolis, will travel to New York later in the year. Ten artists from each city are involved, the curators' intention being for them to explore ideas of interconnectedness and respond to each other's work as the exhibition progresses. Either by accident or design, a dose of cross-pollination seems already to have occurred. Governing much of the work is a grunge-pop aesthetic – the international language of cool disaffection – illustrated by Andy Hsu's installation of pound shop treasure. Quasi-diagrammatic doodling is witnessed in wallpieces by Liz Miller and Diann Bauer, and in Ryan Chamberlain's small paintings, proving the global

influence of Julie Mehretu, Beatriz Milhazes and Franz Ackermann. Singing a tuneless, stentorian version of Whitney Houston's 'I Have Nothing', Sarah Baker from London is outwitted by New Yorker Emily Lutzker performing 'My Heroes, The Clash', part of her 'Un-Karaoke' project in which she 'becomes' a musical icon from each city. The most lasting impression comes from 'Ghost retransplantation' by Diana Shpungin, also from New York. Accompanied by a theremin soundtrack, a flickering video projection shows the façade of an old English pub said to be haunted by two of Jack the Ripper's victims. The film wasn't made in the East End, however, but in the States; in 1996 the building was shipped to the Florida and Shpungin has used this opportunity to repatriate, and hopefully placate, the unhappy spirits. *Martin Coomer*



Sarah Baker, 'I have nothing', 2007, video loop

Exhibition of the week

RO'MA

★★★★★
Albion Elsewhere

RO'MA – the title is an amalgamation of the names of Rosemarie Trockel and Marcus Lüpertz – is billed as a collaboration between these two most respected of German contemporary artists, fellow teachers at the prestigious Düsseldorf Academy of Art. However, none of the pieces are collaborative productions. Instead, this exhibition of recent solo work attempts to trace a dialogue between their very different artistic approaches.

Trockel's work is conceptual and has earned a reputation as being intellectually demanding; Lüpertz makes figurative paintings and sculptures, expressionist evocations of a primitive, masculine vitality. It's difficult to relate his roughly worked bronzes of Hermes, with their quick, bright colours and dynamic poses, to Trockel's sombre photomontages on the wall opposite – which seem bafflingly open-ended and obscure.

But as the exhibition progresses, certain ideas start to correspond and resonate. Trockel's sculptures denote themes of femininity and absence – the hollow emptiness of a womb-like metal ball; the fetishistic elegance of mannequin legs without bodies. Lüpertz uses an exactly opposite motif: the limbless, male, heroic torso – a concentrated essence that constantly threatens to degenerate into formless, lumpy abstraction. And in Trockel's work, a corresponding anxiety concerning abstraction but in a conceptual sense: the abstraction of the photographic subject; or of one's own reflection, caught in several mirror-pieces.



Rosemarie Trockel, 'Olfactory Sculpture'



Markus Lüpertz, 'Woman with mirror'

While such subtle points of comparison may not amount to a shared artistic sensibility, they offer a fascinating perspective on both artists' work, and make for one of the most richly enjoyable exhibitions of the year so far. *Gabriel Coxhead*

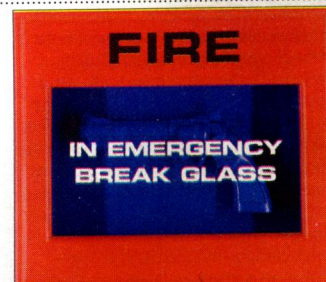
Ben Turnbull

★★★★★
Lazarides Gallery West End

There's nothing Europeans like more than a spot of America-bashing. This easy target is the focus of Ben Turnbull's decidedly unsubtle debut show, 'US vs Them'. Turnbull creates blunt political work with lashings of pop art humour and twisted patriotism. Everything is glossy red, gleaming white and synthetic blue.

Turnbull depicts a place where violence, war and religion are packaged in easy to absorb, cheap toy boxes. Toy soldiers are moulded into a white cross, a coffin painted with the US flag is actually made of decapitated action men and the heads of presidents sit on top of giant Pez dispensers; their eyes too close together, their smiles too false. Aggression is lurking under every plastic surface. Six sculptures titled 'Every Home Should Have One' consist of red alarm boxes filled with bright blue guns behind windows printed with 'In Emergency Break Glass'.

Turnbull's opinion on the dark vacuousness of the USA and its global dominance is not in question. If it were,



'Every Home Should Have One.3'

campaign-style propaganda posters of the artist shouting 'Time For Change' ram it home, again. His approach can be as superficial as the culture he depicts – this is a surface revolt. The red, white and blue Union Jack is notably absent from equally damning attention. One piece in an alcove – a white cross with a pair of stars-and-stripes boxing gloves hanging from it – is the show's most poignant moment and points to a more interesting, involving direction than many of these brash playthings. *Francesca Gavin*

Art