

EXHIBITION

‘Past Perfect’ Open Space & Gallery Holt

.....
Sherborne Dorset 16 January to 16 February
.....

Dear Editor

‘Why restore things’. This was the broad question being asked at the Open Space gallery in conjunction with the newly opened Gallery Holt for the show ‘Past Perfect’. Exhibiting was Savage, Sonya Hanney & Adam Dade, Paul McGowan, and Shrimpton & Bolas.

Paul McGowan’s aptly named ‘Send & Receive’ consists of the real world and exists in real time, Rather reminiscent to Kienholts ‘Back seat dodge 38’, exchanging adolescent sex for the insecurities war. A school chair with a micro screen TV imbedded in the seat with an erect Ariel, screening western culture 24-7. To The right of this is a long black cable dangling from the ceiling with an American Light Fitting attached to the end 1 inch below the fitting is a book being burnt by the intensity of the light bulb. On further inspection you see the books the Koran. Both the chair and the Koran stand on a section of strip flooring about 2 metres Apart from each other. Giving the impression of a set of balancing scales that sit at the heart of western culture, Good old liberty. McGowan’s work is not afraid to confront issues that affect all our everyday lives. Some of the stewards at ‘Past Perfect’ refused to work with the show feeling it’s controversial nature out of place in the historic 18th century town house Open House gallery is situated within. McGowan’s restoration is dealing with cultural divide. Provoking the viewer to look deeper into the issues around us. From birth we our all shrouded in propaganda. The work suggests to the viewer to step outside and look again as with all McGowan’s work, his social observations are not so much about what we can see, more of what we are.

The Shrimpton & Bolas instillation 'Interpretation Of A Room' (who are in fact Peter Linnett & Paul McGowan) Satirises the process in which art and provenance operates to achieve value = status. S&B approach these instillations in the same manner a curator will build a show. First they find the people they want to work with, and then they give them their brief, if there is one. After all the pieces are finished they are then installed becoming one. Their favourite phrase being 'We are only the architects of the work'. It is not until all the pieces fit, does the instillation become part of Shrimpton & Bolas. S&B's use of highly skilled craftsmen questions the art making process as well as ownership. Although the work is highly conceptual, it is also exquisitely finished for example the beautiful section of gate leg table made from an old mahogany, school lab top. Nobody can leave this piece saying 'anyone can do that'. Because anybody just can't. The skills utilised in an S&B show take years to develop, the nurture process is far longer than it takes to complete a degree. So only the content can be attacked, which nicely brings you back to 'We are only the architects of the work'. They understand all too well that S&B are responsible for commissioning the artisans, and the researchers, involved in their works. So the buck stops with them. The making skills are all credited to the individual that worked on the piece. How often does the architect credit the bricklayer or the steel worker publicly? In the world of S&B it's quintessential to the work. 'Furniture realisation' David Collyer, 'Image manipulation and design' Chris Stocker, 'Research' Graeme Whitehall, 'Painting Realisation' Adrian Grond. The Yale Centre for British Art U.S.A. are included in their research team. The list goes on. In the exhibition catalogue an S&B statement, amongst others informs us that 'S&B do not recognise any hierarchy within the art and will not place one form of expression above another (God made the original chair and we are proud to sit in it). The S&B work ethos is simple if you can do it better than us please go ahead. They do not compromise the work, adjusting to any limitations they might have. Peter Linnett's degree is in

engineering and is better known for his work in the conservation of architectural antiques.