

Mary Mary

Figgis, Laurence; Anti-Autonomie, Mary Mary - exhibition text, September 2010

At the crux of Evans' practice is an aim to demystify - but not satirise - the idea of authentic self-expression in visual art. Firstly there is the desire for a historically-grounded sensibility to operate in both the making and the viewing of the work. Secondly and perhaps contrarily - the work avoids an over-reliance on esoteric references for validation. In Evans' practice an acute awareness of art history is always combined with an analytical approach to materials and processes. This two-fold rigour is the framework in which to experience an anxious kind of mythopoeism.

'Anti-Autonomie' features several forms made out of plaster which have as their starting point the "lingua franca" of organic modernist abstraction. This is an idiom so recognisable that it operates almost as a *quotation* in Evans' sculptures. But this language-like aspect also occurs at the level of production in Evans' work. Of the seven sculptures exhibited here, only four different moulds were used; the varying configuration of the - nearly identical - component parts generates the fluid-seeming autonomy of each individual sculpture.

The moulds are like an alphabet (which loses its obvious systematic character in the rapid flow of spoken language). At the same time the underlying fragmentary system is still visible in the seams and joints that have been allowed to remain in Evans' finished sculptures. We seem to be witnessing a "hegemony of the fragment" - concealed inside a metamorphic skin, reminiscent - at its most vulgar pop-cultural level - of the plasmatic shape-shifting of computer-generated-images (which also originate as a limited system of codes).

The area of anthropomorphism to which the *anti-autonomes* direct the viewer is, in the words of the artist, "murky" (often highly sexualised), coexisting with a feeling of classical austerity in places. The implied figures are acephalous (charged with the Bataillean overtones of headless beings) or otherwise amputated in the manner of broken gods and nymphs found in the British Museum. While a fixed "illustrational" reference to the human body is eschewed, high modernist purity is certainly denied. For in spite of its lofty associations with academic tradition, plaster also functions here as visceral, dirty - almost scatological - thereby informing the corporeal energy of the finished works.

The supports for the sculptures are themselves rich in formal interest, their pop-primitivism adding to the playful incongruity that operates within the show as a whole. It might be considered audaciously sentimental to engage with themes like primitivist vitality and modernist conviction in our jaded cyber epoch. But the gesture for Evans is not a simple one of return to form (a post-millennial equivalent of Pre-Raphaelite escapism). His Olympian blobs do not pretend to have "broken free" of their corsets and white collars; rather they absorb all the strictures and contradictions of social and material worlds in their dancing bacchanalian flesh.