

slowly, and it is useful to follow the cues of the materials themselves. *Earthquake* (2004), the other major piece in the exhibition, hummed, throbbed and glimmered at the rear of the gallery, beckoning the visitor to come and explore. It comprises a large, neatly quartered cube made of alternating sets of stacked washer/dryers and loudspeakers, and a film projected above the stack showing a green towel spinning round and round inside a similar front-loading dryer. Minimal in composition, the work displays a series of dualities that operate at a formal level: wood versus metal, fabric versus glass, light versus dark, real spinning towel versus its projected representation.

The experience of waiting expectantly for the laundry cycle to finish adds to the hypnotic and soothing thrumming that accompanies this mechanical dance. The hum of the spinning dryer, amplified by the speakers, is echoed aurally and visually by the sound of the film projector and the occasional stuttering vertical roll of the image. (I was reminded of some of Joan Jonas' early introspective video work.) I found myself swaying to the beat in a concert of automated acoustics for an audience of one. (There may be a reason so many frenzied love scenes end up in the laundry room, and Bolande's sculpture discreetly taps into the erotic sensation and sensual rhythms.) Moreover, its anonymous, utterly familiar forms capture the strange and undefined character of the launderette itself, one of the few zones where public activity meets the most private of domestic routines.

Bolande's art has always referenced cinema, but *Earthquake* is the first film she has shown in a gallery, apart from an animated short. The work as a whole is intensely spare and focused, and her projects suggest an inner clarity, a curious nature and a slow and methodical process of consideration toward a subject. Its lucid and declarative stance could serve as a useful model for contemporary artists exploring accountability and post-photographic sculpture, as a way to investigate issues of representation and place. **Katie Stone**

Karla Black

Mary Mary, Glasgow, UK

In an interview conducted shortly before her death in 1970 Eva Hesse talked about the instability of her works made using rubber. She said: 'At this point I feel a little guilty when people want to buy it. I think they know, but I want to write them a letter and say it's not going to last. I am not sure what my stand on lasting really is.' The combination of rigorous method and fragility found in Hesse's sculptures provides the background against which Karla Black charts her site-specific interventions. Black makes process-based sculptural pieces, often using familiar domestic materials such as face cream, clothing and flour. Both her 'ingredients' and her method – intensive periods spent meticulously creating abstract tableaux – inevitably evoke 'feminine' occupations such as baking and nursing.

In this exhibition there were two works, the first of which was a large floor piece, *Push Push* (2004), consisting of layers of cardboard, newspaper, paint, water and polythene, shaped into an enormous low-sided tray. It had been built up as if from carefully wound bandages, creating a tactile surface very suggestive of skin. Within this imaginary landscape lay a few emptied-out tubes of steroid ointment. The smears of medicinal cream combined with the painted surface, deliberately spoiling its perfect whiteness. Although Black's art projects ideas relating to healing, the ritualistic element of her practice is more self-conscious than it is in those of the earlier Performance artists

she admires, such as Carolee Schneemann or Günter Brus. The abreaction that occurs in her work is both an expression of repressed anxieties present in wider cultural discourse and a working through of ideas of selfhood. Although previously Black made public performances, her work now exists as an installation artefact, or as a kind of indirect self-portrait.

Black's art is not only about the body; it also speaks to and of the surrounding space. This exhibition, for example, reflects and amplifies its setting, in a tenement bedroom that doubles as the artist-run gallery Mary Mary. Walls with painted-over cracks and holes paved with Polyfilla reappear in the texture of Black's work. In the days she spent in the space the artist created images not only of herself but also of the atmosphere of the room. *Push Push* points both to the healing rituals of 1970s Performance art and to beauty routines conducted within the bedroom. Similarly, the second piece in the exhibition, *The Target* (2004), composed of flattened layers of clothes encased in strata of glue and white paint, draws simultaneously on art-historical references and the resonance of the specific room in which it is situated. This use of clothes evokes several other pieces that deal with loss, such as Felix Gonzalez-Torres' photographs of indented pillows, Bas Jan Ader's *All My Clothes* (1970) and Christian Boltanski's works using piles of garments. The shrouding of the clothes within a shell of paint contributes to the sense of clothes kept as a memento. But the work also makes a distinct nod to Robert Rauschenberg's *Bed* (1955), while its title can be seen as an allusion to Jasper Johns, Rauschenberg's significant other during that period. *The Target*, the single aim, is reconfigured here as an intimate event.

Both of the works in this exhibition could be read as a reflection of the private rituals of a girl in her bedroom – conducting skincare rituals and sleeping with a T-shirt worn by her ex-boyfriend. Black's choice of materials orientates the viewer towards this mundane domestic world, but in her handling of these materials it is also possible to recognize something more profound. Her work seems to reveal the way in which the real world of objects and events is transmuted into imagined symbols. In a sense she is conducting the process in reverse, making signification more convoluted, more diffuse. At times this method has generated events that were almost imperceptible, such as an earlier work in which she left a pile of 2000 Alka-Seltzer to dissolve on the pavement in the rain (*Untitled* (2000) *Alka-Seltzer in the Rain*), 2001). Even more complex pieces, such as *Push Push*, are often discarded once they have been shown. This work, so rooted in the contingent, is in the end consigned once again to memory. Its physical manifestation lost, it lasts as an idea for the longest time. **Sarah Lowndes**

Felix Gmelin

Milliken, Stockholm, Sweden

Perhaps the work of art with the most to say about the charisma of revolutions is the one that finds the least to say by way of recommendation: Gustave Caillebotte's *Paris Street; Rainy Day* (1877). Near the Gare St-Lazare the grandchildren of the Parisians who stormed the Bastille stroll Baron Haussmann's new city in the drizzle. Dank melancholy is their purchase on an alienated urban life filled with empty leisure among avenues too broad for barricades.

Felix Gmelin's unblinking picking over of the bones of the revolutionary spirit recreates the hard political lessons Caillebotte framed more than a century ago. Gmelin's lost revolution is the one from 1968, which

was less a political uprising than a social revolt, exemplified to great effect by his remake of Gerd Conradt's tracking shot of students running through the streets of West Berlin that year waving a red flag (*Farbtest II, Die Rote Fahne*, Colour Test II, The Red Flag, 2002). Gmelin's father had been one of those waving the flag, and the touchstone for a series of brash paintings of a naked couple engaged in something vaguely libidinous (*Film Stills*, 2004) is another film from the late 1960s, this time by Gmelin's own father, showing him practising the art of body painting with his partner.

Body painting was used as an instrument to transgress social norms and as a fast track to sexual liberation. For the 'establishment' it simultaneously taunted and teased with desire and distrust. Today Gmelin's father's near-miss sexual encounters, captured on film (*de rigueur* when painting bodies), register as clowning. Revolution's sizzle has fizzled into the naughty cartoons of 'rebellion' spelt out on Gmelin's canvases. He stays on-message throughout the exhibition, teasingly transporting us to the salad days of revolution west of the Iron Curtain, setting him in comfortable opposition to the comedic likes of films such as *Goodbye, Lenin* (2003). Hijacking revolutionary culture to ransom it to today's mainstream is nothing if not acerbic comedy. Here's why: in the post-Reagan era, where the United States military is larger than the next 15 largest fighting forces combined, and all evil empires are dead-enders, revolution à la GDR or à la 1968 has been restaged as a series of crushing visual gags, while being concurrently upstaged by its own offspring, whether the successful mass demonstrations of Viktor Yushchenko's supporters against election fraud or the privatized warfare of fanatical terrorism.

In resurrecting his father's dashed dreams only to scavenge through them, Gmelin has made things deeply personal. The artist told me that he had 'only a vague idea' of his father's activities during the 1960s, which lends currency to his somewhat Oedipal curiosity and naturally charges his work with the legitimate question: 'What did you do in the war, Daddy?' The ends have more than justified his means; we know his father's self-destructing revolution was never his alone (the death of one man's dreams is a tragedy, but the death of a million men's dreams sadly a statistic). One also wonders what his father, now deceased, might think about his son's art, and by extension, where he would pledge his political allegiance today.

In *Two Films Exchanging Soundtracks* (2003) Gmelin's scope widens, and in place of revolutionary transformation downgraded to historical re-enactment he rallies a complex style reminiscent of a double fugue, where subject and counter-subject appear simultaneously at the beginning of a composition and then are intertwined throughout. Facing each other on opposite walls are Cecilia Lindkvist's 1972 documentary guilelessly extolling the virtues of a Maoist education and a Michael Makritsch film from 1967 venerating hashish as the open door to personal liberation. As the title promises, their sound-tracks have been swapped and the cross-over produces a range of effects, from the dark farce to happy coincidence. As college hippies in button-down Oxfords smoke dope in Makritsch's film, the borrowed voice-over overflows with misplaced sincerity: 'Much has changed since the Cultural Revolution. Mao's idea of combining theory and practice is still valid.' Both films are rooted in addiction – one in politics, the other in drugs – and now that we are all clean and sober (history decreed that we go cold turkey) we can smugly nod towards the colossal absurdity that Gmelin has cooked up as if we have all the answers.