

Mary Mary

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admission of guilty bias should be forgivable. There are very few heroes or visionaries, and it cannot be doubted that Patti Smith fulfills these roles, so, maybe rather than being lowly, biased fanatics, Smith's followers are devotees. It would be irreligious and wrong for you to attack us for our faith.

Like Ginsberg, Smith has an acute sense of the necessity of invoking and reveling in the sacred and the profane in a uniformly grey world. As mystic and occultist she rises up through realms of consciousness and experience, and simultaneously and violently drags these altered states down to our level. Her work, such as 'Loves ass at rest - Loves secretion at best', 1977, is mournful and celebratory, erotic and thanatotic. Her line moves in and out of the trap of description; a gut feeling expressing itself as a

pissed-off scribble pulls the work back from straight narrative.

Drawings such as 'Manifesto', 2001, come to resemble the names of angels and devils, glyphs that have been passed down from adepts to lone wolves, wild visionaries, mad saints and holy fools - faces appear in the chained chaos. It is not difficult to find similarities, correspondences with Smith's work and Twombly's, Kitaj, Hockney even ('Seeding', no date) and, to a lesser extent early Pollock and de Kooning ('Great Mississippi Sunburn', 1968). Her work is serious, cathartic and 'expressive' - it makes no apology for believing that Art should be all these things: 'There is no place in my work for irony, no place', she told me. Thank goodness for that.

Alexander Kennedy is art editor of the List



ABOVE Karla Black, 'Defense is an End' 2006

Karla Black

MARY MARY 15 APR - 19 MAY

Taking full advantage of the graceful, well-lit spaces now occupied by Mary Mary gallery in Dixon Street, Glasgow, Karla Black draws out the anaemic beauty of various cosmetic substances and sculptural raw materials. Her witty impressions of accidental form are combined with subtle accents of an underlying careful design.

Entering the gallery, the viewer is struck by the looming presence of a suspended paper sculpture, 'Opportunities for Girls', its ragged wings bound with criss-crossed ribbon to the ceiling. 'Now is the time to normalise' shows Black's taste for inspired combinations of unorthodox media - in this instance, cardboard, paint, concealer-stick and hemp hand-cream.

An aseptic glow in the doorway to the second gallery space forms the pre-emptory glimpse of 'Early Equals Deep', 2006, a large floor-based installation measuring 500 x 650 cm, and described in the gallery plan as being made of 'diprobase cream, polythene bag, toilet paper, kitchen paper, towel, sugar paper, chalk, plaster, petroleum jelly, glass, face powder, concealer stick, and nail varnish'.

Squared-off so sharply that the effect is that of a powdery celestial carpet, the work leaves a precariously narrow walk-way for viewers who shuffle nervously past in single-file, wary that one false move will make them embarrassed participants in its friable design. As if to accentuate this tension the overwhelmingly hygienic vision includes pronounced moments of sullied purity, wasteful-looking objects half buried in the angelic turf - such as patches of toilet paper and polythene bags. These harsher additions are mainly confined to the corners, leaving a vast snowy expanse in the centre, smoothed and patted to the consistency of a velvet or fur, breaking up here and there into dispersed and ruffled granules with occasional congealed patches of spilled liquid creating subtle variations in texture and tone.



ABOVE Olivia Plender, 'The Road to Ruin (for Öyvind Fahlström)', 2006, and 'Vol. 5 of The Masterpiece', 2002

Laurence Figgis is a Glasgow-based artist

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