

Mary Mary

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Visual Art



SCULPTURE INSTALLATION

KARLA BLACK

Mary Mary, Glasgow, until Fri 19 May ●●●●●

Another artist-run space ascends to fully-fledged commercial status as Mary Mary opens its new gallery doors, presenting an exhibition of work by Karla Black. Black's work now more confidently takes on the environment around it, but remains strongly centered on sculptural concerns rather than opting for seemingly expansive installation practices that only manage to reify the gallery.

The first piece the viewer experiences acts like a temporary barrier, a wall that attempts to block your entrance into the space. In walking past and around this almost-sculpture the viewer is slowly pulled closer, examining the small drips, marks and rips that sully the surface and draw you in. A smaller Hesse-like piece hangs from the ceiling on twisted strings: a cloud, a muddled proposition that will eventually hit the floor due to its inelegant weight. This is an attempt to understand negative space, the inside and the outside of an object, and almost succeeds.

Anti-art tendencies always have to be kept in check or (ironically) the art object becomes too hermetically sealed, too alien in its everydayness for the viewer to engage with it. But this balancing act is successfully achieved in the final floor-piece that fills the larger gallery space. A lunar landscape becomes a picture plane, a metaphysical virginal surface covered in plaster powder, and the flotsam and jetsam that nibbles at the edges of the 'female' body – lipstick, nail polish etc: this body in extremis is dust and rubbish. (Alexander Kennedy)



PAINTING, DRAWING, SCULPTURE AND INSTALLATION BECK'S FUTURES 2006 – ICE CREAM REVOLUTION

CCA Offsite, 73 Trongate, Glasgow until Sun 14 May ●●●●●

This year, the Beck's Futures has changed its ways. Firstly, the public has been invited to vote for its favourite artist alongside the usual panel of judges. Second, rather than mounting a touring show as in previous years, there are three near-simultaneous exhibitions in London, Bristol and Glasgow. Granting the public a voice in the selection of the award's recipient may be a good thing, but the triple-whammy of shows might not: on the evidence of the Glasgow exhibit, the 13 nominated artists are spreading themselves a little thinly. That said, there's good stuff here, much of it leaning toward research, collection and presentation – archival art, if you like.

Simon Popper's 'Facades' is a systematic survey of every foreign embassy in London, their frontages coolly displayed in a grid of photographs, part travelogue, part oblique political comment, while Matt Stokes has collated a wealth of information on 'cave raves' showing flyers, posters, newspaper clippings and blurry snapshots. These are twinned with a silent stack of speakers and a tarpaulin printed with a promoters' reminiscences.

Jamie Sholvin surveys the covers of books published in the Fontana Classics series, presenting a complex infographic that collates data points – the length of time between an author's death and his publication, for instance – a collection of 48 books, and Sholvin's dripping paintings of their covers.

Among the other standouts, Glasgow-based Sue Tompkins' work occupies a space between poetry, song and drawing, with gnomic phrases typed onto folded paper. Seb Patane, meanwhile, shows an impenetrable video, featuring two chaps in Tyrolean attire, engaged in a slow-mo dance, one falling to the floor. This leg of Beck's Futures 2006 gives away enough to keep the audience interested, yet one can't help but feel that something is missing. (Jack Mottram)



SCULPTURE AND PAINTING

FIONA JARDINE, WILL DANIELS

Transmission Gallery, Glasgow, until Sat 13 May ●●●●●

April is the Cruellest Month brings together work by Glasgow-based sculptor Fiona Jardine with London based painter Will Daniels. Both artists deal with artifice, with religious and high art references reinterpreted in paper, cardboard and something subtler than irony: artistry.

Amongst the bombastic eye-catchers that will decorate Glasgow's galleries during Glasgow International 2006, this exhibition will act as a quietly confident show amongst shows. Keeping colour to a minimum always denotes a certain formal seriousness – ask the Cubists and their purist followers – but these simple yet monumental works retain a sense of levity that offsets their weighty references.

Daniel's small paintings are bleached-out copies of copies. These tonally perfect works are based on torn paper mock-ups of art historically significant canvases, representations of collaged masterpieces that manage to avoid the dead-end of mere appropriation by dispersing the taint of glibness. The creative process and gesture is petrified in works such as *Mont Saint Victoire 1-4*, in a technique that, one could say, refers to Jasper Johns' early ghostly flags and his later use of Cézanne.

The funereal portals by Jardine are held together with black sticky ribbons of duct tape, yet manage to dominate the space, bringing art, death, ritual and religious architecture together. Was it ever not so? These black doors will not open, and therefore symbolically open onto infinity. Jardine's influences are contradictorily arcane and contemporary, flimsy yet unshakeable. This is solid work. The month may be cruel but the art is good. (Alexander Kennedy)