

Iain Hetherington and Lynn Hynd

Studio 40, Glasgow School of Art, Glasgow, UK

Charles Rennie Mackintosh's strange passive-aggressive studio architecture at Glasgow School of Art made for a curious environment for these two young artists, both doing their best to ignore their hopeless pairing with one another. Of the two, Iain Hetherington was most able to hold his own, owing to the unquiet interiority of his works; canvas battlefields (both psychologically and physically) in gloomy black with paint smears. Very broadly speaking, these new works were populated by 'characters', in that voices appeared to implore from within their composition. These ranged from 'Hello, please may I misrepresent you?' to the Esperanto salutation 'bonvenigo!' – the breezy comedy of one contrasting with the multi-layered paranoia of the other. The marauding 'casuals' that populate his canvases are among the many visual ciphers Hetherington uses; their signature Burberry baseball caps testing which side of Julie Burchill the audience are on. These new 'cultural workers' (his words) challenge the conservative evasion that Hetherington sees at the heart of a lot of painting. He is at pains to restore anxiety to the process of looking at paintings by going against the 'market research' way of ensuring acceptability of intention and execution. By adding ingredients that would get a poor percentage in a survey he ensures his products are intellectually troublesome.

Lynn Hynd's works expressed a kind of dislocation in their use of photocopied and manipulated paper. There was plenty of *recherché* 'drawing with scissors', yet while the Matissonian whimsy they invoked was almost a perverse virtue, it was also their downfall – compounded, one suspects, by having to compete with Hetherington's very different group of works. They seemed to lack weight, and their rather gentle strategies were easily overlooked. Previously Hynd has used supports for her paper works that went quite the opposite way – enormous hulks of sideboards and wardrobes lying around like beached whales, fragments of collage dangling from their flanks – and this exhibition made starkly plain how much she needed such space-filling leviathans to make a more strident call to attention for her pieces. Where the venerable Charles Rennie did help her out was in providing a sheltered wall under part of the mezzanine. Here were torn and coloured pieces of paper (*A Family of Forms*, 2007), that suggested word shapes. Their scabrous surfaces made for an intriguing neolithic shorthand of stilted and broken language. The paper shapes of Hynd's largest piece, *A Conversation Extended for Itself* (2007), toyed with the viewer a little in that they were, in their pendulous blob shapes, reminiscent of Max Ernst and Joan Miró (and numerous other noble Modern blobists) with the colour turned down. The scratchy marks photocopied onto some of the surfaces like televisual snow.

The official flag used by Esperanto organizations is green with a white quadrant in the corner, in the centre of which sits a green star. Variants include a superimposed 'e' over the star and a leftist version, which is red instead of green. A 'by committee' graphic identity crisis is something Hetherington gleefully ridicules. His take on the flag had me thinking about the push and pull of just such a discussion, you can imagine his destructive submission for the new corporate logo. In *Diversified Cultural Workers Take Shelter behind Brightly Coloured Forms* (2007) these flag shapes, and the long bench above which they hung, made for a curious mural to a constructed politic. You get a real sense that he wanted to paint problems onto canvas and then try to solve them, no matter how troublesome the process. I was reminded of *A Cock And Bull Story* (2005), Michael Winterbottom's movie adaptation of Laurence Sterne's *The Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1760). In the making of the 'film within the film' the battle sequence is an illusive scene, the purpose of it in the representation of Sterne's text in doubt. Ultimately we get a reformatted version of our expectation when, after a long take of bored extras in 18th-century costume sitting around campfires, a drunken Rob Brydon starts a comic charge through the dark which inspires the incongruous cry of 'I am Spartacus!' from the chasing pack dressed in a mix of frock coats and trainers. You might say that both artists were similarly irreverent when it comes to their art-historical sources – Hynd often reverently irreverent – but it was Hetherington's genuine engagement with the consequences of the self-imposed problem of image-making that was endlessly fascinating. In one composition his own posters fluttered in the breeze proclaiming the 'new lumpen work' while levitating

palette knives waggled in the dark (we know this because they had the all-important 'waggle marks'). For both artists a deliberately debased memory of art education led to aesthetic transgressions that were wickedly questioning on the one hand and pleasingly emasculating (of Miro et al.) on the other. When modernist masters are attacked by a demented scholastic battle re-enactment society like this, one keenly anticipates the twilight of the twee idols.

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