

REVIEWS

**World Gone Mad
at Limehouse Arts Foundation,
London,
18 June to 23 July 2006
by Andreas Leventis**

**Liz Arnold, Guy Bar-Amotz,
Sam Basu, Varda Caivano,
Jack Duplock, Neil Gall,
Mark Harris, Ansel Krut,
David Leapman, Bob Matthews,
David Rayson, James Rielly,
Adam Ross, John Stezaker,
Gary Webb.**

In their quest for 'les merveilleux', the Surrealists living in Paris from the early 1920s onwards transformed the most commonplace objects into totems of a new mysticism. The use of the dialectical method in which objective fact met subjective fantasy gave birth to the oniric paintings and fetishistic assemblages that often serve to narrowly define the look of the movement. But more than any particular set of defining aesthetic tropes Surrealism is best understood as a mode of attention and perception.

After the International Surrealist Exhibition at the New Burlington Gallery in 1936 British artists started taking notice of what was happening across the Channel. Graham Sutherland, Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon all fell under Surrealism's influence but rather than inciting a truly comparable movement it became yet another style among styles. Yet it was probably only by reducing its status to this purely aesthetic level that

Surrealism was eventually able to creep into the wider public consciousness. By resisting forced comparisons or clichés, World Gone Mad reminds us to what extent the early Surrealist techniques have been absorbed into both fine art practices and mainstream visual culture.

With his two-part floor sculpture *Angola* (2005), Guy Bar-Amotz subtly evokes the pseudo-religious ritualistic aspects of Surrealism. Within two moulded lumps of cement that resemble skulls or alien body parts are encased various found objects which include a small globe and a maraca featuring the image of Che Guevara in one and a lone battered leather shoe in the other. Both of these elements are decorated with candles whose coloured rivulets of melted wax follow the lines of miniature gorges. Standing on plinths *Petroleum 1* and *Petroleum 2* (both 2005) are a pair of potentially lethal-looking oil lamps fashioned out of shattered black rocks of resin, inverted petrol can funnels and glass vases. Compared to the transcendental kookiness of *Angola* these gothic abominations appear menacing and vindictive.

James Rielly's contribution is characteristically unsettling. His large watercolour *Pupil* (2004) depicts two uniformed boys posing as if readied for a school photograph. Each head is obscured by an opaque and unmodulated black blob which seems to float above the picture plane. These strange masses are punctured to reveal an eye from each sitter which quickly turns these innocents into sinister figures. That this image recalls the kind of photographs often used in television or newspaper reports

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peeping out from behind this tangled mass of neon and acid colour suggests a landscape that is simultaneously apocalyptic and utopian. Ribbons of colour resembling party streamers are strewn and interwoven across the entire composition. They gather to form small fluttering rainbows above isolated globe and pyramid elements further complicating our reading of perspectival depth.

With his ostensibly photorealist painting, *Performance* (2005), Neil Gall neatly undermines the smug trickery of the genre. The painting depicts a close-up of a number of small ball-like objects that have been clustered together and covered with black electrical tape. The material qualities of the tape's shiny surface and gummy underside are fluently conveyed but the nature of the objects beneath remains obscured. Upon closer inspection the surface of his canvas reveals an array

of surprisingly painterly marks that momentarily untie the mimetic illusion. Part of the ball at the top of the group is left tantalisingly uncovered revealing its pink colour. These trussed up round elements conjure images of Hans Bellmer's perverse doll constructions, and, with its close resemblance to leather, Gall's rendering of taut black plastic lends a further sado-masochistic dimension to the arrangement.

David Rayson is represented by a number of intriguing ink drawings on pale brown paper. The fluorescent pinks and greens that marked his stylistic turn two years ago have been momentarily replaced by a restricted palette of sombre red, yellow, brown and black. Rayson's dystopian suburban scapes are also shelved here in favour of escapist scenes rendered with an uncharacteristically manic hand. For all its obsessive detailing and disorientating ad hoc compositional

Top: *Angola* - Guy Bar-Amotz
2005
Acrylic resin with Portland stone dust, fibreglass and found objects
(50 x 44 x 35 cm) x2

Courtesy of the artist

Bottom: *Performance* - Neil Gall
2005
Oil on linen
(61 x 51 cm)

Courtesy of the artist and Holes Gallery, London



in the foreground. When it comes to attempting to making any obvious art historical comparisons this drawing flatly refuses to comply.



The cool and limpid geometric abstraction of Adam Ross's *Untitled 2* (2003) provides respite from the Rayson's hyper-activity. A carefully graduated skyscape is annotated with shapes whose cell-like qualities recall the biomorphic entities that populate Yves Tanguy's similarly limitless vistas. But, rather than being organic, Ross's hard-edged metallic elements evoke digital or virtual terrains where relational scale and the rules of