

SHANE CAMPBELL GALLERY

Art Monthly
May 2001

Jason Meadows: Corvi-Mora, London

Alex Farquharson

Corvi-Mora London March 10 to April 14

Even when the gallery is empty of people, you feel you have stumbled upon some kind of social gathering on entering Jason Meadow's show at Corvi-Mora, and one that is sure to raise a smile. It is young, good-looking company, the conversation sparkles and there's a sexual charge in the air. It is difficult to explain how four more or less abstract medium-size sculptures, assembled from prosaic, off-the-shelf materials would create this impression, but it is there all the same. Really.

One is immediately greeted with Highland Park, a very tall, thin, gibbet-like piece, mainly in crisp aluminium, whose top beam sports lavender-coloured perspex leaves. The piece seems on tiptoes, just about touching the ceiling and set to topple. It looks top heavy since the three points on which it rests are less than half the width of the top beam, and the varying weights of different elements are difficult to discern under a smooth spray of high key colour. Although much much taller than the other three, which all rise around two feet off the ground, the lightness, lankiness and precariousness of Highland Park means it doesn't dominate.

All four are arranged more or less in a quadrant facing inwards, if they can be said to have fronts. The way each touches the floor and holds its personal space evokes a descriptive set of verbs: these sculptures squat, splay, perch, reach, lean, straddle, turn, arch, crawl, support, hold and stretch. If this sounds like yoga or pornography then that's apt, since yoga, porn and his sculpture all involve freeze-framing an anatomically dextrous and suggestive pose. The one Untitled piece makes these links explicit. From one end it could refer loosely to some kind of lowrider motorbike, but if you ignore the long 45° aluminium strut, the rest of it is unmistakably structured à la doggy style: back arched, elbows propped, stomach off the ground, breasts forward, thighs parted, ass in the air. But since this has been achieved with a few lengths of metal, a couple of blocks of wood, some very elementary shapes in MDF, and a predominantly grey palette -- albeit with fuchsia accents -- it is hard to get too carried away.

Of the four sculptures Black Panther is the most muscular and dominant. If it weren't jack-knifing at its emaciated waist, its fore and hind legs would be just about symmetrical. Although consisting mainly of hollow, elongated, purple painted rhombi, the overall composition is probably the most explicitly figurative of the group, clearly looking like a big cat -- though without a head -- stalking its prey, stretching its sinews in readiness for the pursuit. Although not actually black, its dark purple is the kind of purple cartoon animators use to mean black.

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Spinal Tap is probably the most odd and reticent of the four works; the borrowed title a complete mystery to me. It is a table-like structure, without a table top, in the form of a pitched-roofed house. Like Untitled and Highland Park the parts that do the most work are made of brand new thin aluminium struts, though its front leg is a cadmium red gable made of wood. The two sides of the roof carry seemingly capricious bunches of struts and rectangles looking like nesting window frames in three-by-two pine, loosely stained grey, that half obliterate the symmetry of the piece. Next to the others it looks strategically insecure and unresolved -- the wallflower of the quartet -- but then it does sort of depict half a house on its side sunk into the ground.

Meadows' sculptures look like what a New Generation sculptor and an imaginative child working together might come up with, given free rein in B&Q for a week. Occupying a middle ground between abstraction, narrative and our modular, ready-made consumer culture, Meadows' distinctive exploration of the ongoing possibilities of sculpture seems to be about self-determination in a worldly, socialised sense rather than autonomy in a formalist's dreamland.

ADDED MATERIAL

Alex Farquharson is a curator and critic. David Shrigley Untitled (Fuck the world) 2000 Jason Meadows I to r Untitled Black Panther Highland Park Spinal Tap all 2001

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