

Hallogallo

Stuart Cumberland, Sean Dawson, Andrea Medjesi-Jones, Michael Stubbs, Dolly Thompsett, Vicky Wright. (Curated by: Sean Dawson, Andrea Medjesi-Jones, Michael Stubbs)

Sir John Cass Gallery, London Metropolitan University, 59-63 Whitechapel High Street, London E1 7PF

Open: 10 February – 9 March, 2012. Mondays – Fridays 10am-5pm

Private View: Thursday 9 February, 2012, 6-8.30pm

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In the face of stock market meltdown, unemployment, revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East, rioting and looting on the streets of London, the survival stakes become high and when the chips are down what's left amongst the rubble is the last benign act - decadent hedonism.

Hallogallo is the title of a track from the Krautrock band Neu from 1972. It's a knowing play on the German slang word halligalli which means 'wild partying' and is intended as an ironic pun.

On the one hand all the paintings presented utilise hallucinatory materials, colours, forms and narratives to convey a sense of worldly displacement - a form of wild partying. On the other, the artists self-consciously deploy these methods as shadows of historical painting styles; they paint the 'act' of abstraction and figuration in a knowing, playful and often excessive manner that quotes the carnivalesque parody of law and order.

Stuart Cumberland paints single colours onto white grounds which are rendered by means of silkscreen and stencil techniques from hand-made sketches. The repeated, flat renditions of mechanical processes make for unexpected, mock-heroic formal shifts that re-emphasise the apparently simple or ironically dumb gestural motifs of art history.

Sean Dawson's painterly motifs undergo a transformation and metamorphosis as they are scaled-up from acetates of real gestural marks and repainted in a hyper-real style to reveal hidden details, colours, forms, depths, contours, rhythms and flows on the surface of the canvas. Realised almost as semi-sculptural 'becoming-forms' which appear out of an array of ambiguous backdrops they often lend their meanings to alienating science-fiction films and illustrations.

Andrea Medjesi-Jones' abstract paintings re-animate the handmade gesture. Poetic brushmarks juxtaposed with flat areas of colour made with simple block printing techniques jostle for attention amongst the overlaid repetition of these processes. The resulting mix creates a psychedelic vision of expressionist painting that screams of the dualism of displacement and reconciliation, both culturally and art historically.

Michael Stubbs pours household eggshell, gloss paints and tinted floor varnishes over ready-made adhesive stencils, peels these off when dry and repeats the process again and again to develop both an optical and material layering effect. The flatness of the repeated surfaces offers a heady mix of opaque and transparent planes. These contrastingly delicate and bold passages, which playfully cross-reference the genres of pop and abstraction, deliriously reveal themselves in all their sensualist glory.

Dolly Thompsett's paintings amalgamate the material and the illusory by uniting technical virtuosity with dream like subject matter. The layers are constructed with gestural brushstrokes, fine drawing, luminous glitter and poured resins. Her hypnotic scenes reference the human toil and struggle from the paintings of Hieronymous Bosch and Pieter Brueghel as well as popular cultural imagery such as Vietnam war movies and Cecil B. DeMille's epic cinematic set-pieces.

Vicky Wright's vividly rendered brushmarks resemble tortured portraits exploring conceptual slippage and possible malfunction, while at the same time representing discursive worlds of a personal history. They become metaphysical marks and residue that guide her practice and technique. The works are made all the more anxious by being placed on the 'wrong' side or reverse of wooden panels; paintings that are back to front.