



visibility of black bodies in art spaces, and the resilience of one's resolution to remain in – and to encircle, as if to claim – institutions to which one has otherwise been refused sustained access or self-determination. A work of quiet rage and dogged perseverance, it speaks in a rare voice: brave, confident and clear. ■

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The Everyday Political

CGP London 18 July to 26 August

Although it was not planned or proposed as a direct response to it, that 'The Everyday Political' takes place in London concurrently with the 'Great Exhibition of the North' in Newcastle and Gateshead brings issues around marginalisation and tokenism into focus.

The North of England is often defined in terms of being detached from the art market, and therefore isolated from an art world that exists as a network connecting various global hubs. The way that culture is imagined to be dependent on hubs and markets is also what drove the invitation in 2016 for cities and regions in the North of England to bid for the opportunity to host a government-funded art and design festival, ostensibly as part of ex-chancellor George Osborne's 'Northern Powerhouse' project. I mention this before the exhibition itself because when considering regionalism in terms

of contemporary art, it is necessary to acknowledge the wider political situation pertaining to funding for the arts, but also basic infrastructure and development that has ramifications as much for artists and cultural workers as for everybody else.

'The Everyday Political' at CGP London, curated by North East-based *AM* contributor George Vasey, can't realistically be isolated from the above issues and in many ways effectively faces them down. This exhibition is information-heavy, but avoids a dry overreliance on text through a consideration of the body in space. Three copies of Emily Hesse's new book *Black Birds Born From Invisible Stars* are hung on dowels as you enter the gallery, and leaning on the wall to read one of them I find myself facing Kuba Ryniewicz's portraits of influential women artists of the North East. Neither of these works would be as effective in isolation, the images seeming irreverent and unmoored, whereas here they tease out the humour in Hesse's uncompromising writing. In her introduction, Hesse asserts that 'At one point in time I wouldn't ever have made such a statement as I have done at the beginning of this paragraph. Never would you have admitted to not knowing something, you just would have kept quiet', which is an important sentiment to keep in mind throughout. It is imperative to question what we are allowed – or even encouraged – to be ignorant of, and what we are expected to know, and to parrot.

Ryniewicz's photographs play around with the representation of women artists, depicting Jo Coupe, Deborah Bower and Janina Sabaliauskaite, who were nominated as influential by Holly Argent and Jade Sweeting. In an age of free-flowing digital reproduction, these black-and-white portraits emanate sarcastic *naïveté*, which is also true of Mark Pinder's images, exemplifying how this exhibition attempts to grapple with tokenism by staring the issue down, with a sly smirk. The work on show acknowledges the ways in which contemporary culture craves an edge while also being able to commodify an experience without becoming mired in it. At first glance Pinder's photographs might seem to be complying uncritically with this tendency, but then, as with Hesse's book and Ryniewicz's portraits, they are placed into affective proximity with work that points in other directions. Pinder's photographs are hung on an inky, scribbly vinyl mural by Matt Antoniak that pulls the viewer out of sombre reflection with its unconstrained proportions. Then, moving clockwise around the gallery walls you encounter Joy Labinjo's *Cousins*, a large oil painting that beautifully captures the heady joy of being a child among children, outnumbering the adults. The voices of young people, and references to parenthood, family and intergenerational relations have a presence throughout, particularly in Toby Phips Lloyd's film *Washing Machines Are More Useful Than Smart Phones*, which directly addresses the concept of society in the light of Margaret Thatcher's infamous claim that there is no such thing.

Alongside individual artists there are collectives and archives included here, and I would have liked the opportunity to sit down and spend more time with them. A structure that is called a conversation, between Harriet Sutcliffe and Holly Argent, displays press clippings and ephemera. Roughly photocopied collages and prints in a muted palette of jade green and putty pink hang from

wooden bars, the shades of hospital walls and school corridors that have now become nostalgically fashionable. Much of the material displayed here is from the Women Artists of the North East Library, and a second shelf on another wall of the gallery holds 'zines and small publications, as well as photocopies of entire books in plastic wallets. One 'zine in particular, titled *The Singing Usherette: a Gateshead cinema zine*, catches my attention, and in it I encounter an anecdote that encapsulates what makes 'zines and their archiving so worthwhile and rich, leading to a consideration of how we signal interest and attraction within different social constraints. The writer recounts: 'My mother used to flash her torch up to the projection box three times and that was a signal to my dad that she would meet him after the show.' In a text and information-rich exhibition, these frequent returns of physical interaction and consideration of relationships to the body is welcome.

Labrinjo's paintings also play into this strand, whereby body language and the interplay between members of a community, whether they are family or related in some other way, becomes as important as the transmission of information. The give-and-take between sincerity and humour in this exhibition is enjoyable, and in the gallery's smaller room only one of Pinder's black-and-white photographs is displayed, this one depicting a young family shot from a low angle, appearing leisurely and retro-futuristic. This final section also features work by Foundation Press, based at the National Glass Centre in Sunderland, including a variety of worksheets that encourage creative play and experimentation with design. Foundation Press is named for the foundation course, where people hoping to study at art school are granted a year in which to experiment. Similarly, the printed sheets, which are free to take away, offer the permission of a foundation course, insinuating that being an artist is more a matter of practice and community than proximity to a market or institution. ■

Lauren Velvick is a writer and assistant curator of Humber Street Gallery, Hull.

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