

'AXXPRESSUNIZM'

aliceday, Brussels

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Reviewed by Maria Fusco

Maria Fusco. *Untitled magazine, Spring 2005.*

'Axxxpressunizm' was a messy manifesto – the bastard spawn of Lynne Tillmann and H.P. Lovecraft. The show was ripe with the horror and honour of teenage life and the debris that surrounded it, looking as though it could fall apart at any minute (a good thing) and stuffed with works by twenty seven artists, in the form of wall-based pieces, performance, video and sculpture.

The Untitled Star Wars Mockumentary by LA based filmmaker Damon Packard was the unintentional centrepiece of the show. A furious and hilarious pillage of scenes showing George Lucas' feudal patronage of digital technology in his latest movies, is constructed with pilfered footage from recent *Star Wars* DVDs CGI 'extras' sections, spliced with Packard's own wraparound fictional insertions of the downtrodden crew venting their spleen on the director, together with excerpts from other films including *Apocalypse Now*, *Hawk the Slayer* and *The Devil's Rain*, portraying Lucas as a puffed-up, dried-out despot. This is a fine piece of work; I couldn't quite say that it's a good feature film as such, but it is an interesting example of contemporary post-documentary slashing its way out of 'the penalty of realism', that John Grierson, (the Obi Wan Kanobi of modern documentary film) talked about as a stricture that, 'has to bother for ever not about being 'beautiful' but about being right.'

Wry monoped, *The Brown Girl* by Jemima Brown, was an observer of sorts to the whole exhibition. I've seen her in other spaces before, but still she always manages to scare the shit out of me. Very neatly attired in a brown cardie and an over-the-knee skirt, the waxy figure looks like a secretary that has been accidentally dismantled instead of the office photocopier. She seems resigned to it though. This sculpture is a decoy, forever acting as a lure or uncanny focal point, by posing as something familiar in appearance. As a piece, it is sufficiently odd, or other, to create uncertainty and to disrupt our expectations by watching us watching her. Requiring some close attention, Lorenzo de Los Angeles III is a Philippine born artist with a taste for intimate viewing. *Balls* is a small coloured pencil and acrylic drawing of a pair of testicles that look lightly broiled, bejewelled and dripping – generous in both size and in spirit, bursting out of the jeans they have been tucked into and peculiarly divorced from a penis of any sort. There's a sneaky jubilation in this work, funny and ghastly. Like a sketch on the back of a jotter, the artist pinpoints his knowing return by saying, 'Reverence, obscurity, inaccuracy and unfulfillment are some of the facets of nostalgia that intrigue me. Nostalgia in certain respects is generally unavoidable in current artwork.'

Mike Paré's blissed out pencil drawings look like reworked versions of classic counterculture human landscapes. In *Revolution Blues*, a crinite, purblind teenager is afflicted in one eye by a US flag that's painted on his face. He's surrounded by what appears to be a sea of festival-goers or protestors, who, now released from colour and time, appear passive or waiting. They look tired, from repetition perhaps (the over used icon) rather than from over indulgence. It's difficult to divine whether these manifestations of Paré's interest in signposts of the cultural and political grassroots movements of 1960s and 1970s Americana could ever retain effervescent information outside of their time and context of production, or

whether reworking and re-looking can only ever show, but never really tell. This was a recurrent theme in 'Axxxpressunizm' and its curators Mark Beasley and John Russell fused together McDonald's latest marketing strap line, 'We're Loving It', with something of the spirit of Guy Debord in *Society of the Spectacle*: 'The pseudo-need imposed by modern consumption clearly cannot be opposed by any genuine need or desire which is not itself shaped by society and its history. The abundant commodity stands for the total breach in the organic development of social needs. Its mechanical accumulation liberates unlimited artificiality, in the face of which living desire is helpless. The cumulative power of independent artificiality sows everywhere the falsification of social life.' By collecting together, in their own words, 'surplus value', 'non-aristocratic excess and boredom' and 'deterritorialisation' they created a dissipated conglomerate of 'un-mourning, an affirmation of the immanent force of the possible that is in the world as "Events of becoming".' The result then, an über profusion of culture and commodity, of the extramundane and the pedestrian: finally meeting its audience with a golden shower of libidinal excess.

Lorenzo de los Angeles. *Encounter*. Pencil on paper

