

## Mark Currah, *Dead Life*

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### Bank

**Mayor** (Upmarket)

Looking like a 'wanted' poster from the golden age of the Hollywood Western, an enlarged press release introduces the artist-group BANK to Cork Street. There's a photograph of gallerist James Mayor, with his trademark cigar, and the self-styled entrepreneur Nick Silver; they proffer a cheery 'Hello' then launch into a finely-judged example of ironic art-speak no doubt penned by the artists. It rambles on about context, form and Duchamp, then gradually degenerates into a lot of stuff about the living dead. Even funnier is the hastily assembled retraction; like schoolboys standing before the housemaster, BANK snivel: 'We feel we let ourselves down.'

Mounted in sombre frames are three painted still-lives entitled 'Dead Life: Resurrection I, II & III'. They show antique drinking-vessels, joke-shop toys and pharmaceuticals, but BANK's emphasis on context and form make it seem absurd to look for symbolism. Neither very bad nor particularly good, the paintings are strangely appealing, nevertheless; given more practice, BANK might get quite adept at them. But would they want to? While the serious business of flogging British Surrealism goes on in the front of the gallery, BANK are hung at the back among piles of old invoices and redundant PCs. The joke is on whom?

In their 'Retraction', BANK apologise for being too clever-by-half and state that the 'pieces of work were not meant to be a joke'. Have the great, end-of-the-millennium iconoclasts packed it all in to make sensible still-lives? You must be joking.

*Mark Currah*

