

If you want to see a work of art that makes Emin's (or Gilbert and George's or the Chapman Brothers') look like piffle for the chattering classes, go to GOD, by Simon Bedwell, John Russell, Milly Thompson, Andrew Williamson who work together under the collective name of BANK. But first, be warned. The piece consists of three life-sized crucified figures made of wax body casts and human hair, finished to a level of realistic detail that makes Spanish 17th century polychrome sculpture look blandly tasteful by comparison. As in high baroque art or in the spiritual exercises of St Ignatius, the artists make the gruesome physical sufferings of Christ on the cross as explicit as possible, rendering with horrific precision every laceration, hole, gash, and caked bloodstain on each tormented body. This is not the peaceful aftermath of the crucifixion, but an execution in progress. Bodies are mangled and torn, mouths scream in agony, and dried blood pours down onto the gallery floor.

Shocking though it is to find such a work in a contemporary art gallery, it is presented without a shred of irony, and still less with any intention to blaspheme. The only departure from traditional iconography is the trendy inclusion of a woman and a black man on crosses alongside a Caucasian Christ. By demonstrating what the actual effect of nailing a heavy human figure to a wood beam would be, the work makes you realise how thoroughly pain itself has been expunged from traditional representations of the oldest subject in Christian art. Just go to the National Gallery and look at the way the old masters managed to paint near bloodless crucifixions and you will see how completely artists have denied the physical reality of a story that is, after all, the basis on which an entire religion is built.

The irony is that simply by choosing to treat this most traditional and least controversial of subjects realistically, these artists have made a work which is virtually unexhibitible in a public gallery in this country. Patiently hand crafted over a period of months, in terms of modern art GOD is as politically incorrect as you can get. This is truly transgressive, challenging, difficult work. I must caution you not to go unless you are prepared to be distressed.

Tracey Emin South London Gallery London SE5 (0171 703 6120), until May 18. BANK 34 Underwood Street N1 (0171 336 6836) open