

Sarah Kent Review: Stop Short Changing Us. *Time Out*

"BANK is a family. To its four members, BANK represents the possibility of creative ways of living - caring for each other, co-existing, inter-relating, socialising, whilst simultaneously producing art... BANK believes fundamentally that empathy between human beings is possible and we see Expressionism as a possible antidote to recent nihilistic and individualistic fashions... Art is how we live. It's our love affair with life.' Ahhhh! BANK continues to walk a thin line between sentimentality and cynicism. You can't be sure how seriously to take their gooey protestations. Which is all to the good; otherwise, they wouldn't get away with work that is poised between the risibly awful and the intentionally bad. The issue is whether you laugh with them or at them. I suspect that they aren't sure themselves; ambivalence permeates their enterprise.

Navel-gazing reaches its zenith - or nadir - in this show of self-portraits. Two sculptures present the group naked and clothed. Wax heads daubed with paint are attached to crude wooden frames covered in stretch fabric. One group wears boiler suits, the other exposes rag-doll genitals and wool pubic hair. These sad clusters are surrounded by huge paintings of the artists in overalls. One portrays them, social-realist style, as heroic, soul-searching pioneers. The graffiti-scrawled background reads: 'I am a guilty bourgeois artist. I must atone for arty parents.' Another shows them in a Fauvist flurry of bright paint; sticking out from a third painting are wax hands brandishing paint brushes, busy adding finishing touches to their own likenesses. Hidden round the corner, though, is a sculpture that doesn't rely on self-deprecating witticisms. The group forms a huddle of lumpen, dark brown forms that have a primal animal presence. Clustered in a circle, they present their backs to us - a protective wall against hostile eyes. No posturing, no pisstaking; just interesting work.