

## THE PORTRAIT at ASHWIN STREET

### ANNIE KEVANS

My work reflects my interests in power, manipulation and the role of the individual in inherited belief systems.

The image of a child is easily recognisable as a human in its most unaffected state. Currently, I use this image as a metaphor, juxtaposing it with ideas relating to, for example, exploitation, evil and power. I hope that my images will raise questions about how and why a person, or group of persons, behaves in a certain way. As Foucault explained, a person's identity is not preset – rather, it is determined by the interactions of a person with another and is, therefore, a shifting temporary construction. My work looks at ideas of personal responsibility within structures determined by time and place and the role of those who create those structures.

Kevan's portrait of George Bush as a child levels these questions at the very foundation structures of the modern world and the apex of its power base.

- Courtesy the Artist and Flora Fairbairn

### BOO RITSON

Since studying sculpture at the Royal College of Art, Ritson has had a desire to paint, though not necessarily to make paintings. This has manifested itself in painted objects, with the applied paint enclosing the object, like a skin, recasting it as an image of itself. Her new works take this progression further, enveloping a person's head in paint.

Household paint is applied quickly and gesturally to the sitter's head, hair and clothes, covering them in a portrait of an imagined character. These are recorded as large colour photographic portraits, though they exist somewhere between painting, photography, sculpture and performance. These seemingly simple images are layered with complexities. Who is the portrait of, the sitter or the painted character?

The armature of the sitter's face gives the characters credibility beyond the painted surface. This work poses questions as to where art exists, and where the event unfolds. The physical event of a person having paint applied to their head and clothes and this being recorded by a camera is not the event we are looking at. The subject seems to exist in a different (fictional) time and space. We do not see the sitter but the character they have become. Their fictional personas extend beyond the thin layer of paint from which they are constructed; the characters exist outside of their image.

- Courtesy the Artist and David Risley Gallery

### CLAIRE PESTAILLE

Claire Pestaille carefully manipulates art historical portraits. Though rather than immersing herself in the history of painting, the artist is interested in the materiality of paint and the painting process which she combines with a personal and sensitive response to the art of the past.

Creating plots around historical painting's often familiar protagonists Claire Pestaille unearths veiled allegories and secret histories. Exchanging lace fans for morning stars or a brooch at the breast for an inching Stag beetle, the artist offers alternative destiny's for her female characters. Freeing them from the confines of history the artist allows each character a more comprehensive and complete existence for a contemporary audience.

- Courtesy the Artist and Rokeby Gallery

### CORMET LAFARGE

My work is about identity. There is nothing to say about this that is not already a lie already told by somebody else.

- Courtesy the Artist

### CRAIG WYLIE

Through the process of painting a photograph, previously manipulated on pc, transformation takes place. Paint and source image coalesce on the surface of the canvas literally returning the photographically encoded image to an interactive space which gives the work a physical presence not possible in photography. No matter how detailed or resolved the work may appear, painting is still a reductive tool. Simplification is a necessity and opens the image to interpretation. What initially may have been latent phantoms of suggestion in the photograph, become amplified, concrete, or at least directed in the painting. A new channel of communication is set up between viewer and painting that did not exist in the source image.

The visual codes of digital imaging running throughout this work, form the structure upon which it is based. The work is at once portrait; paint and digital code. The densely dotted background (due to the digital source image) has become a silent maelstrom with the subject seemingly in the process of becoming engulfed. He is embedded in the flat plane of digital photographic space possibly undergoing some sort of unwanted transformation.

- Courtesy the Artist

## DOUGLAS LAMOND

My interest in painting has always been rooted in the formal aspects of its execution. Line, colour, composition and process are intrinsic elements in any painting, and become the backbone of any figurative endeavour. The figurative portrait has never lost its capacity to intrigue me; the human expression has endless resonance and often provokes a very personal, emotive response.

- Courtesy the Artist

## ERICA EYRES

Eyres is fascinated by the absurd and how we, as humans, react when faced with situations which generate conflicting emotions. Eyres creates characters from her shrewd observations of both daily life and the manufactured world of the 21st Century, obtaining her material from conflicting sources such as television and film, history, the news and the everyday and ordinary.

Often the characters lives are exposed as disturbingly troubled, and the viewer is confronted with figures who deserve both our pity and distaste. Faced with the absurd lives of her characters and the conflicting emotions generated by them the viewer is forced into an uncomfortable position where inconsistent emotions are required to be addressed.

- Courtesy the Artist and Rokeby Gallery

## FERNANDO MARQUES PENTEADO

My work is about *portraiture* and displays of masculinities. I am interested in how perceptions of maleness and stigmas around the male performances turn into visual patrimonies. I am also eager to locate notions of good and evil that envelope the male body. In present times I feel the urge to portrait '*evil doers*' who are unique representants of a belligerent and sly humanity, in permanent need of cleansings and happy endings. The works are around *cameos and broaches* --- pieces of adornment that men lost their connection with through time.

Together with such a loss, men also became strange to social address, to present to, or to comment on, their own physical or emotional beauty, which essentially masquerades the group into beast-boys.

- Courtesy the Artist

## GAVIN NOLAN

Gavin Nolan's recent paintings are perverse and contradictory. Disparate elements combine resolutely to form freakish portraits. The various characters develop personalities and traits. Seemingly demanding of their creator ("make me look beautiful") to the point that Nolan seems bizarrely to have gone easy on his nightmarish subjects. As in so many portraits of course, true personality cannot help but caustically seep through. His dialogue is appropriately diverse. The delicate brushwork is at odds with brutally applied splashes, swathes and scumbles. Despite this contradictory language, the rigorous glazing and twisted compositional tricks combine to harmonious effect. The paintings are discordant, disquieting and beautiful.

- Courtesy the Artist and Reece Jones

## GLAUCE CERVEIRA

Cerveira's strange visions sometimes suggest the daydreams of a megalomaniac stylist or designer who has been granted the powers and the licence to reinvent and rearrange physical and material reality according to her whims. Her pictures look almost like someone's warped idea of designer heaven - a decidedly post-modern utopia where the dysfunctional elements have disappeared completely and the functional ones have been subtly redesigned according to some perverse and inscrutable logic. Flesh in particular is notably absent from these images...In Cerveira's painted world the utilitarian becomes exotic, while the opulent or exotic often become treacherously activated.

- Courtesy the Artist and Marc Hulson

## HARLAND MILLER

Harland Miller is perhaps best know as a writer, in spite of his involvement in solo and group exhibitions around the world for over a decade.

Miller achieved critical acclaim with his debut novel, 'Slow down Arthur, Stick to Thirty', (2000), which followed the publication of a small novella 'First I was Afraid, I was Petrified' for his Fig-1 exhibition in the same year. This novella was based on the true story of a female relative with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD), discovered when Miller came across a box full of Polaroid images of the knobs of a cooker that she had taken. Miller presented the book to an audience in the form of readings and alongside the huge collection of Polaroids that the OCD sufferer had amassed.

- Courtesy the Artist and White Cube

## JAMES WRIGHT

Prescott's face earns him a public hanging... Painters have occasionally suffered for their art, but few can have suffered more than James Wright, who will shortly unveil a portrait of John Prescott. Wright was inspired, if that's quite the word, by an image of the deputy prime minister and love machine apparently nodding off in the Commons. And he was unable to get this picture out of his head for two gruelling years. - The Sunday Times, 06/11/06

The creased canvas has the look of a snippet pulled out of someone's pocket; an amusing cartoon cut out of a newspaper. The composition was partly inspired by the comic artist "Mats!?", the dense and detailed backgrounds with large lighter faces and objects in the foreground. The subtle background and grotesque interpretation of the face in the fore becomes a cross between a propaganda poster and something out of Dawn of the Dead. His invasion of the quiet landscape where dusk is falling is a bit like switching channels on the TV after watching a great film, and being confronted by war images or just an ugly old politician surrounded by scandal and calls for his resignation.

- Courtesy the Artist

## JOEL CROXSON

The (works) are beguiling and often beautiful things, but they usually engender a level of doubt and misprision. On sheets of ply there are paintings containing irregularly placed images of pasty faced and introspective men, sick and dribbling. They look like forsaken religious figures and down and outs, but these saints and sinners are often taken from images of footballers or celebrities culled from newspapers, or any number of arbitrary sources. There is a loose structure or hierarchy in the placing of the characters, but the artist seems to be messing up the system as well as systematising the mess.

- Courtesy Roy Voss

## MANDY URE

The ambiguities and capabilities of painting provide the backdrop for Mandy Ure's work, which leads us through several phases of ambiguity to a moment of absolute candour... forms swim out of Ure's painted blats, always remaining the result of a unitary, mechanistic production – they do not signify in an expressionistic way and, close up, rapidly disperse into abstractions... All the classic ingredients are in place, but exploded so as to be read as conventions. While her paintings have something of the radiance of terminally –ill patients, that radiance should not blind one to their true condition. These paintings are not what they appear to be, but become themselves through temporality, effecting a dance of the seven veils before revealing themselves. For Ure, the question now is not how to make another painting; that part, as she makes abundantly clear, is easy. The question she asks is what painting should do, what its purpose can possibly be.

- Courtesy the Artist and M. Herbert

## MARCUS HARVEY

Marcus Harvey's painting 'Myra', which was first exhibited at the Royal Academy in London in September 1997 as part of the exhibition 'Sensation' resulted in unprecedented national and international media attention. Based on the portrait of the child-murderer Myra Hindley - an image that has been repeatedly reproduced by the press since her conviction - the monumental 13 x 10 ft. monochrome painting is entirely composed from a child's handprints. As the artist has said, 'The whole point of the painting is the photograph. That photograph. The iconic power that has come to it as a result of years of obsessive media reproduction.'

His 'door paintings' that were first exhibited at Mary Boone Gallery, NY (2002), alongside the 'coffee table' series, exemplified his accomplished painting technique and developed a new photo realistic style that did not immediately reveal its subversive content.

- Courtesy the Artist and White Cube

## MATTHEW DE PULFORD

Matthew De Pulford studied at Kent Institute of Art and Design 1999-2000 and the University of the West of England 2001-4. He has shown in group shows in Bristol including three at Spike Island 2003-4, Encore Royal West of England Academy 2004 and Lux The Crypt, St. Paul's Church 2004.

- Courtesy the Artist

## NADIA HEBSON

Nadia Hebson's elegantly melancholic paintings plunder iconic images from an array of subject matter – Dutch sea battles, early German landscapes and Elizabethan miniatures – and are loaded with acknowledged symbolism that alludes to grand philosophical concerns in the history of painting: Romanticism, The Sublime, Melancholia. Here, they are reworked through a playful manipulation of time and scale, to create something altogether more intimate.

- Courtesy the Artist and Chapter

## PETER KENNARD

Each small canvas renders a human face. With varying degrees of distinctness, an eye, or a nose, or part of a face emerges from the overall dark grey of the oil paint. The faces are anonymous, of a certain age, life-worn. They are painted with a delicate realism and an empathy that is quite unexpected within the set-up of a minimalist ethos. Since the features are life-size, and since we cannot easily seize the image visually, it is as if we ourselves are looking into a dark mirror.

- Courtesy the Artist, Guy Brett and Gimpil Films

## RACHAL BRADLEY

No tricks, no magic. It is all a setup and you know it. So proceed through the gaps, through those spaces that examine what is at stake in the politics of representation. Not a series, no, but serial, yes. The result of a polyphonic, channel-hopping, information saturated, multi-cultural global society. Links but this is not chain mail. Resisting linear narrative, there are impossible spaces at play, elliptical connections. Stereotypes, deep worn clichés, retold old jokes, servants of mass iconography, rehashed and displaced. Iranian propaganda (portraying the martyrs of an anti -iconism regime) does a two-step with the happy-hardcore rave scene to the sound of a Kafka short story. Do you feel like dancing? Outlines of figures, unknown but sensed as present. Both unseen and visible. Re-animated, reinvigorated, the inanimate and animate tentatively embrace. Fiction and reality take a walk together. Attack them on a literal level and laugh out loud, a big belly roar.

- Courtesy the Artist

## SAM DARGAN

Dargan creates paintings and drawings that express the alienation and dissatisfaction experienced in contemporary daily life. Isolated middle income men are depicted in stark environments with political graffiti often forming the backdrop; packed with hostility, Dargan's work comments on the imbalance of power systems. Often responding to cinematic imagery and 20<sup>th</sup> Century literature, and more recently to the melancholy and underlying savagery of the Mannerist era, Sam's paintings are infused with contemporary commentary.

- Courtesy the Artist and Rokeby Gallery

## SARAH DOBAI

Dobai's works are fundamentally, concentrated culminations of an extended process into a single still or moving image. It is the considerable labour entailed in the creation of her singular pieces that instils them with the highly concentrated nature that has come to characterise Dobai's work. The situations (that she pictures),...are essentially explorations of the psychology of atmosphere. There is a not quite rightness about these explorations that stops Dobai's work from ever really coming to rest.

- Courtesy the Artist and Simon Morrissey

## SARAH SCARSBROOK

Sublimely unaware of their own importance, Scarsbrook's pumps have served as the vehicle for a self-portrait. Functioning as a witness to the passing of time, the shoes in Scarsbrook's performance piece 'Pump' act as a surveyor to all events that fall below the radar of consciousness creating the portrait. The unassuming pumps have seen endless bus journeys, mundane work routines and remarkable events. All has been recorded as the canvas upper, rubber soul and cotton lining retain every stain, scratch and spillage. The detritus collected and arranged, without predilection, is a visual record of existence.

- Courtesy the Artist

## TARA CRANSWICK

Representational paintings are always about attempts to control, to capture, re-frame, and interiorise the impossible enormity of the outside. Through the process of making portraits artists seem able to look at, and through, their sitters, but they are nevertheless an exercise in obtaining, locking.

*Galen* is a portrait. At the time I had no way to control the enormity of what this person was for me, what he represented. I set out the space of a canvas, and time of a painting, to lock him in.

- Courtesy the Artist

## YAEL SCHMIDT

I am interested in images that transcend an event to show the complexity of a condition or a state of mind. I make images in charged environments- a bathroom or bed. In them I recognise a space that is universal and functional but also extremely personal and charged with implications. It is a place where one is uncovered, vulnerable but also most comfortable. I am interested in juxtaposing themes like exposure and comfort, intimacy and isolation, duration and stillness.

- Courtesy the Artist