

PAUL STOLPER

IN THE FLESH

Paul Stolper Gallery is pleased to announce *In the Flesh* featuring paintings, drawings and sculptures by Darren Coffield, Shaun Doyle & Mally Mallinson, Susie Hamilton and Andrew Hollis. The exhibition is on view at Paul Stolper Gallery from June 30th to August 27th 2011. Engaging with traditional mediums and materials such as bronze sculptures and painting, *In the Flesh* is, by contrast, contemporaneous in its modern content, vernacular and subject matter. The exhibition proposes a composite interchange between the artists' various interpretations and malformations of the human figure, some sensual, some humorous and others grotesque. From an art-historical standpoint, the exhibition presents the following specific challenges: the traditional and time-honoured depiction of contemporary life - specifically urban or suburban, and the continued practice of deconstructing the figure to reflect its dialogue with modern media, image-making and our absorption of images in day to day life.

Darren Coffield's gestural paintings, made with a pop sensibility, literally deface forms with a simple inversion. Yet regardless of this extreme deformation – the icons he paints are still innately recognizable. Coffield chooses to portray his predecessors, who like him, broke down the figure into abstraction. Picasso, who synthesised multiple facets of the body and spent his life manipulating flesh, and Cocteau whose surrealist works rearranged body parts and embraced the chimera. The tone of his works, at once light-hearted and disarming, recall Warholian disaster works that aggrandized tragedy through repetition and celebrity.

Andrew Hollis shows modern figures caught within dark, ominous moments of everyday life – banal appropriated photographic tableaux remodelled in luminous paint. His works are imbued with a myriad of art historical references, converging on the figure and its enveloping urban architecture. He plays with the inherently layered nature of images by manipulating and editing out certain elements, highlighting our preconceived notions in the absorption of images, especially within different types of media. The mood is sensual, dreamy, and nostalgic; yet his figures are often isolated in dark, atmospheric swathes of colour, hovering within a curtain of anxiety, separation and awkward exposure. The cropping done to the figures, like a clean decapitation, is at once horrific and photographically benign.

Susie Hamilton also uses existing images and embraces them through paint. Abstracted and lushly painted with heavy impasto, several of her grotesquely ample figures are taken from pornographic magazines celebrating exceptionally voluptuous and overweight women. Vulnerable or aggressive, sensual or monstrous – the figures nonetheless serve as a fluid, corporeal landscape for Hamilton to dress in sinuous line and colour. In keeping with concerns of the flesh and the simultaneous desire and disgust which preoccupies it, Hamilton's clothed figures, equally as corpulent, are sourced from the artist's covert photo shoots at the suitably laden environment of a consumption mecca: the local supermarket.

Shaun Doyle and Mally Mallinson have also deliberated on the effects of supermarket consumption on the flesh. 'Ecce Homo Tesco' is part of their ongoing oeuvre exploring a satirical and pessimistic prediction of mankind's downward evolutionary trajectory. Ironically cast in heroic bronze, this de-evolved figure's mutations seem to centre on his ability to consume fast food, carry beer and devour the fake-tanned flesh of reality television. Their scrawled works on paper mirror the absurdity of quotidian life in relation to primordial existence; critiquing an era identified by the irrational desire to shop, copulate and consume as a means of 'survival.' Rudely confronting the affiliations between science, religion, commercial media, politics and low-brow culture, Doyle & Mallinson's works portray modern man as so inherently primal that even religious concerns imitate desires of the flesh, from sexuality to immortality.

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