

# PAUL STOLPER

## SARAH HARDACRE – HEAVEN WITH THE GATES OFF

Exhibition Dates: 4 May – 2 June 2012

Private View: 3 May 6-8pm

Open 10am-6pm Wed – Sat

Paul Stolper Gallery is pleased to present 'Heaven with the Gates Off' an exhibition of new works by British artist Sarah Hardacre. In her first solo exhibition at the gallery, Hardacre has created a series of paper collages, hand-pulled screen prints and works on canvas all revealing images of Modernist architectural skylines taken from the Salford Local History Archive together with images of women from second-hand gentlemen's magazines. While these works can be read with a feminist critique; the sensuous female body overlaying the phallic-like uprising of modern architecture, Hardacre's practice is largely a 'preoccupation with Modernism as a legacy of the welfare state and how concrete and class came to be connected' (Sarah Hardacre 2012).

Drawing on the utopian ideologies of modernist architecture, the tower blocks reference the social engineering of urban regeneration and housing redevelopment schemes and shape how public and private spaces are occupied and used. 'The functional and Brutalist style of building in Britain was developed for cost effective post-war housing on a mass scale and because of its attachment to utopian thinking, seemed doomed to disappoint from the start (Emma Jones 'The Old-New Brutalism.' *The Modernist*, Issue 4 2012).

Similarly, the newly revitalized British economy, growing youth movements, and goals of women's liberation that characterized the 1960's held hope and promise for change on a grander scale. But the scale of reform was limited and the structures that were designed to induce collectivism have instead left a legacy of alienation, serving only to marginalize those who live there.

In the collage 'To Pollinate or not to Pollinate' the base image is a double-page spread from a vintage gentlemen's magazine. Hardacre masks the nude reclining figure with an image of Ellor Street Redevelopment in Salford. By covering any signifier of emotion from the face of the woman, the viewer's gaze is drawn into the architectural landscape, underlining Hardacre's investigation into a strictly individualized world of control, of fetish and fantasy, desire and deviancy, submission and domination. The overt eroticism and suggestion of exploitation is comparable to the politics of modernist architecture where communities, and most of all women, were denied any role in shaping their collective future.

And yet, in the screen print 'Burned by the Heat,' which depicts the view from a tower block above Briar Hill Court in Salford, a model gazing upward appears to breathe life into the rapid architectural landscape. The Swarovski crystal details added to the print visually re-insert glamour and beauty in a place where it is otherwise lacking.

Bringing together the disassociated worlds of the public archive and the clandestine fetish store, the juxtaposing images of formal and natural structures create a collection of uncovered stories from outside commonly inhabited spaces. Hardacre's work depicts history and participates in reality, using manipulation and montage to create an interruption or Brechtian 'alienation effect,' by which means, as Walter Benjamin describes in '*The Author as Produce*,' the 'superimposed element disrupts the context in which it is inserted' (Owen Hatherly, *A Guide to the New Ruins of Great Britain* 2011).

Sarah Hardacre lives and works in Salford, UK. Her work is included in the collections of The British Museum, The British Council and private collections worldwide.