



In another room, Macuga's installation *When was Modernism*, similarly creates an immersive experience. Here, she revisits a project of the same title, which had been included in the exhibition *Santbal Family: Positions around an Indian Sculpture*—also curated by Watson (with Suman Gopinath and Anshuman Dasgupta) and seen at the Museum van Hedendaagse Kunst Antwerpen (MvHKA) in 2008. That exhibition invited artists to respond to Ramkinkar Baij's public sculpture *Santbal Family* (1938), displayed on the campus of Kala Bhavana, and regarded as a significant milestone for modernist art in India. Macuga's contribution was inspired by Tagore's vision of learning in an outdoor environment, among nature rather than within the walls of an institution. For this, she mocked the 'white cube' of the gallery by installing a real tree, and arranging stone benches and a number of sculptural exercises created by past students of the Bengal School around it.

The title of Macuga's work is borrowed from the art critic Geeta Kapur's publication of 2000, *When Was Modernism?: Essays on Contemporary Cultural Practice in India*. Her articulation of the question furthers Raymond Williams's own reflections on the problematic temporality of 'the modern' in one of his last lectures, 'When Was Modernism?' (1987). However, quite understandably, she does this from an Indian point of view, sensitive to how 'modernism forms a double discourse with nationalism' in this colonial context. The objects that Macuga has borrowed and shipped from Shantiniketan—ranging from clay portrait busts to abstract studies—may speak of another or 'alternative modernism,' one that even appears to have appropriated European avant-gardism's 'primitivist' aesthetic; but they also prompt consideration of when and how modernism manifests itself amidst the local and nationalist causes of early 20th-century India.

Both installations respond in some measure to

the cosmopolitan ethos of the InIVA, which in many ways is the ideal venue for a show that pays tribute to Tagore's artistic vision and impact. Macuga has used the Education Room, for instance, to complement her piece with an archival project; having dug into the collections of the Tagore Center UK, she has assembled a 'timeline' and displayed other documents (photographs, catalogues, etc.) celebrating him as a political artist who obviously advocated independence, but struggled to reconcile this with a global outlook and a resolute condemnation of the kind of nationalism modeled by Europe's colonial powers. These two illuminating and colorful installations will do a delightful job in launching the InIVA's collaborative research venture on Tagore; but one cannot help feeling that the cool interiors of David Adjaye's otherwise talented architecture militate against the proto-environmentalist spirit of Shantiniketan.

Joel Robinson

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Mitra Tabrizian at Wapping Project Bankside

Mitra Tabrizian, the 2013 recipient of the Royal Academy of Art's Rose Award, known for her choreographed scenes of dislocated groups in the urban environment, has shifted her perspective onto the derelict factories of the English Midlands. Seven of the 13 photographs in the *Leicestershire* series shown at Wapping Project Bankside are reproduced to a large scale and are distinguished by their number rather than their location.

Having focused her photography in liminal spaces, most notably in the Middle East, as well as the more private spaces which are preferred in her portrait photographs, Tabrizian's focus on the former industrial region of Leicestershire might initially appear at odds with her *oeuvre*, which is characterized by photographing subjects with an immigrant or 'other' status,



Mitra Tabrizian, *Leicestershire*, photograph. Image: Courtesy of the Artist and Wapping Project Bankside.

and a profound emotional dislocation from the place in which they are photographed. In contradistinction, *Leicestershire*'s former factory workers stand in literal isolation. They are photographed alone, solitary and small, against the recurring background of red-brick walls, punched-out glass, and concrete floors, which typify the abandoned factory buildings dotted about Leicestershire.

These sections of buildings (for Tabrizian usually chooses to photograph only a part of the whole) are physical and historical testimony to the decline of the once-thriving 20th century textile industry. Most of her subjects' gestures—always articulated in the focus (or lack of focus) of the gaze—are either of remembrance or reflection. One man's stare parallels the solid brick wall in front of which he stands, looking beyond the frame. Another looks directly toward the bricked-in windows in the third story of the building toward which he is turned. A notable success of Tabrizian's series is its subtle heterogeneity; though yoked together by a common condition, her subjects remain individuals who articulate a unique relationship to the building before which they are photographed.

In one photograph, there is no subject. There is a sense then that this landscape is too much for the usual solitary man (for it is always a man) to stand before it. The human presence is felt in *absentia*—the viewer either places him there as an abstract man, without prospect, entitled only to this painful awareness of lost time and opportunity or is himself placed in the human-less landscape forced to relate to the building

and the common history of the photographed subjects.

Tabrizian's photographs are conscionable of loss, but not necessarily nostalgic for the past. Their acute rendering of the subjective sense of personal loss proves Tabrizian capable of alighting on a new topic, and a new place, without relying on old techniques. Though she continues to favor the choreographed scene over 'real life,' Tabrizian draws upon time rather than place as the source of meaningfulness in this series. The ruinous decline of the dominant industry in Leicestershire relies more on historical consciousness, rather than a social one, which has arguably dominated in her former works.

Hannah Sender

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David Boyce at Blindspot Gallery

The myriad deceptions we use throughout our lifetimes to discover the uniqueness of our personalities are unfailing reminders of just how difficult it is to establish anything like a constant identity, a face that will fit all occasions, one character that everyone will embrace. Every artist, regardless of the genre in which they may be working—painting, sculpture, drawing, or photography—wonders about this. What face do I wish to set through my work? How should I interpret my various 'personalities' to others? Such questions are not easy to answer as identity is a complex subject that means different things to people in diverse situ-

ations. The New Zealand-born photographer David Boyce does not have a single answer or vision, rather he provides, in his engaging collection of self-portraits, shown under the title *From the Shoulders of Giants*, a few possible interpretations of himself through the guise of others.

Making self-portraits has been an obsession for many artists from the earliest of times. Of course, there are many ways, subjectively and objectively, to consider self-portraits and their value. One only has to look at Rembrandt's remarkable collection of self-portraits to glimpse the depth of his obsession to understand his own identity and character as he grew older—a deeply personal visual record of time's inexorable changes on one's face and one's soul. The manner in which he applied the paint and realized the lines of the face, the head, and the eyes over the years was truly remarkable. One thinks, too, of van Gogh's self-portraits in which the sense of anguish he projects is almost visceral, and how Frida Kahlo's works suggest that she is there watching the viewer wondering what on earth the viewer wants.

What does the viewer want from self-portraits? The answer, of course, is a great deal indeed. But what most of us want is something about the honesty of the artist, an emotional impact that one does not get from full figuration, something of time passing, and of memory.

In placing himself in the work of another artist Boyce

forces us to look at all of these as well as his role in making a new artwork and in revealing the old one in which he now appears. Each face reveals Boyce as a collaborator in time and by being so he is asking us to question originality in artmaking. Boyce takes on the eyes of his model and with his face uniquely aligned with another's he also asks one to reinterpret memory and identity.

The anguish of a character from a Caravaggio painting or the profound sadness of van Gogh runs through many of Boyce's prints. But what I find most intriguing is the feeling of timelessness that he has managed to realize in his work. Here, for a moment, we are present with his 'giants,' which is humbling.

Ian Findlay

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Fang Lijun at Hanart TZ Gallery

Among the finest of contemporary Chinese artists, Fang Lijun makes art that is immediately engaging visually, intellectually, and emotionally. His wide range of anonymous protagonists, from full figures to disembodied heads, provide boldness for narratives that demand attention. This is certainly the case with the works in his most recent exhibition. The new ceramic pieces, alongside his oils and ink-on-paper works, add an appealing juxtaposition of materials and ideas that will certainly encourage viewers to



Fang Lijun, 2013
Autumn, 2013, ink and color on paper, 37 x 43 cm.



Fang Lijun, 2012-2013,
2012-2013, oil on canvas, 160 x 130 cm. Images: Courtesy of the Artist and Hanart TZ Gallery.

think of Fang's art in a new light.

A probing view of the human condition, the fragility and uncertainty that dog humankind, has always been at the heart of Fang's painting and humanist ideals. His keen examination of the pressures of conforming to communist ideology and the force of the collective are still present, the serious face of authority set against the smiling (grinning) faces of conformity. They are presented in ways that suggest television soap operas or quickly printed *manhua* (comic books). Yet, even as his art is touched by some degree of humor, which on occasion borders on the morbid, Fang draws us into his vision with fine technical skill and a restrained empathetic tone. It is such aspects of Fang's art that linger in the mind's eye and give weight to his accomplishments.

The majority of the pieces in the show are small ink-and-color-on-paper works that remind one of inexpensive

prints. For someone used to seeing his large paintings, especially those bursting with energy, these will surprise. Small here refers only to size and does not mean lacking in dynamism. Indeed, the content is rich and timely, informed as it is by notes on corruption, the deadly heat of the sun and changing seasons, the urban crush of humanity, the craven acquisition of wealth and power, and, in the case of his crumbling ceramic 'bricks,' shoddy construction practices.

A first impression of many of Fang's small pieces and large oils is of people in the rain: for example, *2012-2013*. A closer look, however, suggests that the rain is a metaphor for their tears; in other works, each of which is a small drama, of the kind that one might see in a soap opera. But there are others, as in *2013 Autumn* (2013), in which anger, rage, self-satisfaction, and fear reside. Such work harks back to many earlier paintings where his vision was



David Boyce, *Untitled 01: From the Shoulders of Giants*, 2012, pigment print, 60 x 60 cm. Edition of 8. Image: Courtesy of the Artist and Blindspot Gallery.

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