

Photoshopped high cheekbones and narrow eyebrows (*Justin's Had Work*, 2014, and *Reconstructed Lassie*, 2012). In Waters's Hollywood, celebrities cannot escape the plastic surgeon's scalpel, whether they are adult, teenager or pet.

Other works by the eccentric American director are collages of snapshots taken from films, newspapers, TV and other pop culture references. Some of these become too-literal one-liners, like in a photograph of the Kennedys descending from Air Force One while the figure of Death from Ingmar Bergman's 1957 classic *The Seventh Seal* is lurking behind them (*Grim Reaper*, 2014). Another such literal object is a stroller whose safety harness has been replaced with leather bondage straps and has the logos of gay clubs printed on its seat (*Bill's Stroller*, 2014). Waters archly toys with the transition of gay culture into mainstream values and offers a critique of what might have been lost along the way.

The works become more interesting when Waters leaves his comfort zone of gay references. He interferes via series of interventions in Ansel Adams's typically sublime black-and-white nature photographs by inserting a cruise ship, a high-rise tower block and a crashing aeroplane. It is not the image of American wilderness or romantic nature photography that Waters is after here, but rather the name that is associated with them, as can be understood from the work's title – *Cancel Ansel*, 2014.

Personas, names, actors and their characters are at the heart of this show. This is why the most powerful work is *Kiddie Flamingos*, 2014, a video in which kids perform a table-read of the entire obscene (even when censored) script of the director's cult 1972 film *Pink Flamingos*. The film itself blurred the lines between characters and actors, with the drag star Divine playing herself alongside non-actors. The kids, wearing make-up and colourful wigs, further challenge the normal construct of actor-character relations.

The sun is the main actor in **Nicholas Mangan's** *Chisenhale* show. The Australian artist, who once used coconuts to power one of his films, has now harnessed the sun's energy through solar panels installed on the roof of the galley to power his current work. The installation itself deals with the power of the sun and our relation to it. According to the press release, the central film is based on extensive research and explores the Aztec Sun Stone in Mexico City, the mirrors of the Gemasolar Thermosolar Plant in Spain, the dendrochronology research of the Laboratory of Tree-Ring Research at the University of Arizona, audiovisual data gathered by NASA's Solar and Heliospheric Observatory project and the work of Alexander Chizhevsky, who related solar cycles to political events. But in the film itself, none of these can be grasped – this highly fascinating content is emptied by its overly aestheticised images; nothing more than a few nice shots of tree rings and sunshine reflected in mirrors.

Much more intriguing is the second film, in which a Mexican ten-peso coin continuously spins in slow motion. This circular movement offers a microcosmos of the constant circulation of currency, which stands in comparison to the cyclical movement of the sun. The coin carries the image of the Aztec Sun Stone, the governor of the Aztec calendar's cycles, but here the cycle is unnatural – the perpetual spin defies gravity, thus implying a sense of disorder in the cyclical weather patterns and ecological system, which effect and are affected by the global economy. It is all there in this tiny coin, and it is this reduced, hypnotic film that should have been the sole star of the show.

Lisson Gallery's summer group show **The boys the girls and the political**, curated by Hana Noorali and Lynton Talbot, tries to capture a snapshot of current art practices largely drawn from the capital. Like in any group show, some works are better than others. A highlight

London Round-up

Sprüth Magers • Chisenhale • Lisson Gallery • Studio Voltaire

The face of **John Waters**, who has taken over Sprüth Magers with his humorous and at times deliberately offensive art, is looming from a photograph, all deformed as if from excessive plastic surgery (*Beverly Hills John*, 2012). He sits comfortably next to portraits of Justin Bieber and Lassie, both also showing off their ridiculous

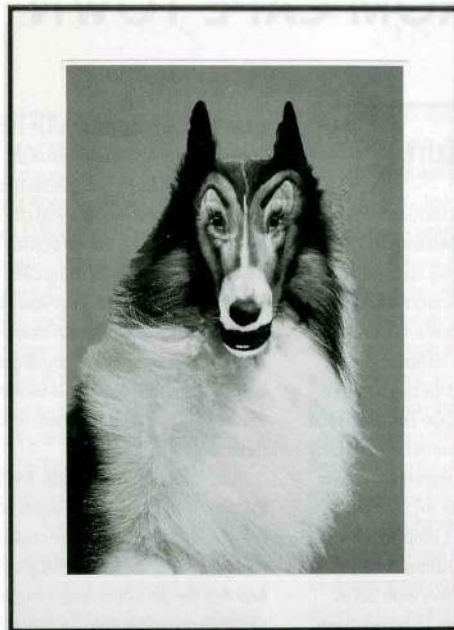
is the excellent video *7 year Itch*, 2015, by Lucy Beech and Edward Thomasson, in which six couples perform choreographed sequences on blue gym mats as if in a yoga class. Finally, their movements and vocals culminate in a ridiculous soundscape of a sex scene to the sound of U2's *With or Without You*. Another work that tries to investigate the performative in a public space, but does so less successfully, is Alice Theobald's video, which is spread across three screens along the galleries. Footage of a couple wandering around a square in Hackney, which is filmed by three different cameras, is edited so that perspectives overlap and the similar frames overlap one another (*And the Wanderers Wandering at the Wonders of Themselves*, 2015). Theobald explores cinematic editing conventions, repetition and viewpoints but the results bring nothing new. Similarly, many of the works use overly fashionable aesthetics but are lacking in content. For example, Richard Sides's room-size collage installation of cardboard boxes, adverts and newspaper clippings seem a parody of hyped DIY and readymade collage aesthetics, and the accompanying video footage seems in parts as if it was taken by a bored teenager with a camera.

Other artists include Jesper List Thomsen with a series of paintings which lend the exhibition its title, Ben Schumacher with an installation and oil paintings, Elaine Cameron-Weir's brass pieces and George Henry Longly's collage-like sculptures. All of the participating artists are interesting in themselves but often the selection of work does not play to their strengths, with links between them only loosely found in linguistic, performative and technological gestures.

Luckily, I could rest from all this hyped newness with **Aaron Angell's** delicate, thoughtful and timeless show at Studio Voltaire. The small ceramic sculptures, for which the young British artist is known, are positioned on shelves covered with mustard-colour tweed. On the covers, oblique symbols are embroidered – an arrow, a white horse and what look like figures of winged angels – all reminiscent of prehistoric cave paintings. Two of the shelves are hung high above, carrying silver pipes which look like chapel organs (*Model for Water Organs*, 2015). This clever system of display grants the space a religious air, and the ceramic works are suggestive of ritual artefacts.

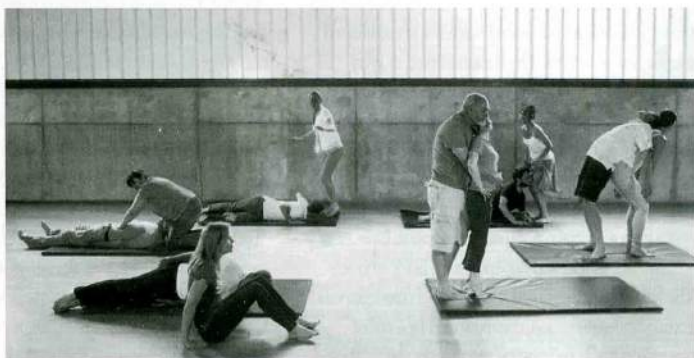
In the centre of the gallery, white metal structures, which also function as pedestals for the works, hold long steel rectangular containers. One is filled with grey gravel, the other is empty. The container motif repeats in many of the ceramic works, which are composed of shallow miniature basins or vessels that house unrecognised plants and small animals. Angell carefully dismantles the traditional image of ceramics as functional containers, while turning his objects into independent microcosmoses of natural happenings. Phallic motifs, rather than 'feminine' hollow shapes, protrude from the glazed surfaces – long pipes, brick structures that look like old water towers and threatening saws.

Also included are paintings, made by means of a Sisyphian application of hundreds of flecked layers of paint, so exact that they almost look digitised. The images depict formalistic nocturnal scenes of moons, candles and utopian clusters of rounded buildings, all glowing against the black background in colours and textures similar



John Waters
Reconstructed Lassie
2012

Edward Thomasson
and Lucy Beech
7 Year Itch 2015 video



to those of the glazed ceramics. On the floor, two giant steel sculptures of enlarged shoe-like dog-chew treats look like the shoes of a mythical giant (*Show Chew*, 2014-15).

Almost completely estranged from this collection of objects are four hygrothermographs, the kind used by museums to measure temperature and humidity in galleries. These could have implied that the ceramic objects are artworks of great value and importance, but they are defunct – stuffed with rotten, mouldy slices of bread, teeming with organic decomposition rather than sterile components (*Misericords*, 2015). They conclude this perplexing collection of uncategorised artefacts, sealed in a time capsule from a mysterious period of craftsmanship, folkloric beliefs and psychedelic visions. ■

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