

art of england

THE SERIOUS GUIDE TO UK ART

A Textile Dynasty

Lee's Tapestry Works of Birkenhead
Exhibition at the Williamson Gallery

Peter Blake

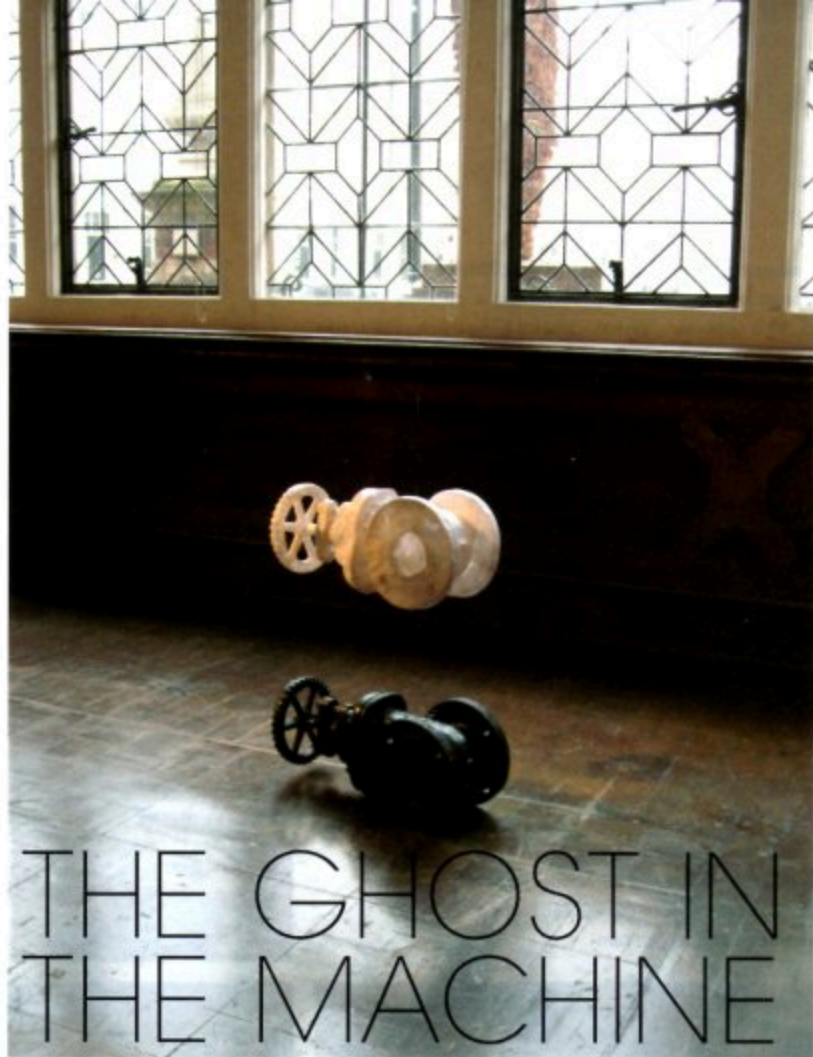
The Venice Suite

The Outsiders

Urban Artists at The New Art Gallery, Walsall



Issue 54
February 2009
£3.70



By James Maconochie

The sculpture of Valerie Jolly inhabits a world where an echo becomes visible and the trace of a presence becomes tangible. It is a world where multiple perception is invited, like waving your hand fast in front of your eyes and watching its after-image, but with freeze-frame definition.

above: *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*

right top: *Daydream*

right: *Anthropomorphing*

On first encountering Jolly's work, there is a peace and tranquillity that is immediately palpable in the banality of the subject matter, but when you scratch the conceptual surface the multi-dimensional ethos is revealed and a bright white ride through reality begins.

In simple, practical terms Jolly casts objects in wet tissue paper which, once dried, is peeled off to make a colourless, almost weightless 3-D facsimile of the original. It is important, as the artist says, to realise that, "The process not only catches the detail of the object but catches its place in a certain moment in time."

She stresses, "This technique enables me to give materiality to minute, invisible or imaginary lines. The material qualities of the tissue paper allow me to reconstruct and transform the original object into something else."

So what are the objects that are so echoed, with the emphasis on echoed not copied?

Possibly the most striking of the subjects is the series cast from solid industrial pipe couplings as seen in the piece entitled *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. Here the ghost of the original dark metal coupling hovers effortlessly over the original object. Slight taints of colour have been transferred in the casting process giving it a haunting skin and flesh-like quality, almost embryonic, but, at the same time, completely formed.

In another piece, *Any Body Wholly Or Partially Immersed In a Fluid Experiences An Upthrust Equal To The Weight Of The Fluid Displaced* the life-size, frozen, ethereal casts of pipe and wheel-valve rest in immaculate perspex boxes, as if to trap them should they try to float away or melt like dry-ice.

In following works the trace theory is illuminated where the evidence of someone's presence or an event past is captured in the sculpture. In *Daydreaming* a cushion is cast in the signature, fragile, frosted tissue, its surface wrinkled with the impression where once lay a resting head. With *Anthropomorphing* a chair of brittle, cast tissue hangs from the wall, its back frame made up of half support struts and half coat hanger. In these and in other works from Jolly's collection of apparitions there is the question of their place in time. We are not sure whether they are from a time before, from a time now, or are a glimpse of what is yet to be.

As the artist says, "They are on the threshold, the threshold between positive and negative space, inside and outside, presence and absence, reality and memory, reality

and dream. My sculptures address presence through thinness. They echo the forms of the original things yet consciously depart from their real world substance...They are like silent quotation marks that reiterate the objects around us."

Echo or no echo, a shadow of past or future, once seen they certainly return to the now of one's perception again and again.

Valerie Jolly completed her BA in Fine Art at Central St Martins in 2006. Her outstanding talent and potential has recently been recognised with a Bursary Award by the Royal British Society of Sculptors.
www.valeriejolly.com
www.saatchi-gallery.co.uk/your_gallery/



left: Any Body Wholly Or Partially Immersed In a Fluid Experiences an Upthrust Equal To The Weight Of The Fluid Displaced