

DOMOBAAL

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writing about Haris Epaminonda's work, extracted from the essay for 'Oyster Grit' - a group exhibition introducing a line-up of domobaal gallery artists as at September 2007.

As the tendrils, fog and fabric of these works poke at and attempt to envelop me I realise that there is not now, and likely never will be a single explanatory vat within which I can deposit them to contain the many untidy ends of meaning currently cluttering up my thoughts. There are plenty of clues available as to what these artists do, how they might relate and why they should be shown together at this time. However, having become immersed in the microcosmic realm they collectively create, the fact that they are all represented by the same gallery seems pretty low on the list of priorities driving the design behind, if not the guts within, this group exhibition.

... Where Jeffrey T Y Lee's works are one-step removed from their time-based points of reference, Haris Epaminonda's collages have been manufactured from the repro evidence of commercial photography's past. The carefully cut and interlaced sections of 1950s reference books resonate with a fantastical nostalgia that transcends the specificity of their sources. These delicately composed, visually abstemious works toy with the premises of pictorial correctness. At first spec we sense that something extraordinary has occurred but it takes a while to extricate the inherent anomalies of the image from the recent doctoring it has received. As in Ní Bhriain's interim territory, physical laws have been abandoned, the everyday reordered to create new meaning. Though equally particular in terms of construction, these are not the same rectilinear containers for projected thought. The appearance of the real and the narrative possibilities it represents might co-exist in each image, but Epaminonda's reconfigured scapes are not purely ours to colonise for they are already tainted with the political flavours of other peoples' histories. The frozen points of intersection are often disquieting: families appear to leach moments of inner turmoil through borrowed eyes; doily-spliced urban and pastoral habitats rupture like acid-splashed skin as one physical entity breaks through another; while architectural symbols of human aspiration have been perspectively tweaked and melded with future visions of the world from which they were hewn.

Epaminonda's video works animate the same sense of precise transformation. In 'Nemesis 52', ordinary objects are combined with only the slightest evidence of human intervention, to become performative props in a succession of curious rituals. Where the collages hold the constructed tension steady, the moving image allows for it to build. While we are aware that one half of the action in each case is the mirrored twin of the other, it is incredibly difficult to unpick Epaminonda's seamlessly edited process. In the first performance, a vaginal mollusc-type creature appears to self-inflate a pair of blue balloons from its pump-like core; in others, folded lengths of pink fabric and surgically gloved fingers fuse and reform like kaleidoscopic beads. In a similar way to Lee's spare renderings, the threads of potential meaning (political utopias, gender, cultures of collecting) have been subtly strung to infer rather than dictate response.....
