

David Gates – The Rural College of Art

domobaal, London

22 February – 30 March 2013

Reviewed by: [Catherine Linton](#) »

Triangulation

Carland is stalled, a place for leaving, looped to return. Un-peopled town, streets named in praise of vehicular means of escape. The artist marks his territory, slowly. Two hundred acts of pinhole peeping tom, capturing blank visages of squat pitch roofed, pigeon coup, people pen dwellings, the occasional parking up.

Visceral pock marked monochrome shifts place to past. Animation allows passenger gaze to drive the *H_* on through, Malick style^[1], into wild terrain, *The Rural College of Art*.

Four silver gelatin and bitumen works on waffle backed cardboard, show water, trees at a distance, bark, intimately. Un-tampered edges retain fragile imprints on white ground. Passive submission as framing device, marginal yet essential to a new compositional focus, a locus within, asserted by precise processes of black lacquering. In printmaking language, taken, put on a plate and bitten, deeply.

Vampiric act enlivens. Juxtaposition of pale virgin margin with satanic blackness restages the true photographic development that has taken place. Layers, liquid depths, play light across many blacknesses, demand deep looking.

Pinhole is lens, gaze, a portal for the act of capture. Are circular hole, roundel, populating black spot merely an honest acknowledgement of this, a visual fessing up of having been and done to? Dictator's mark of solar/lunar perfection?

Is triangle geometrical fetish, thrall in anal system, personal ritual, the holy three? A reigning in of forces elemental, trine of past/present/future, chime of spirit/mind/body?

Answer a: all of the above c/o *The Rural Cult, ahem College of Art*

Answer b: circle (triangle) > square

Answer c: not sure

The artist collects, enjoys systematic categorisation, the anthologising of things. *More Birds of the Day*, enshrines plate after plate in altered book form, bears red brand of possession. Birds bitten by the black triangle, with meticulous perfectionist care. Beaky heads, beady eyes playfully, plaintively peep from

bitumen bondage, teasing a look into blackness.

Only two are reprieved: *Plate 7. Great Spotted Woodpecker found dead with an oak gall impaled on its bill*, respectfully passed over, beyond having. *Plate 19. A pair of robbers look around suspiciously before taking sticks from a neighbour's nest*, its own dynamic drama in completeness, needing no help.

Three stave odyssey of fragments, book-pages, the found. Harmonised with accent notes within a confined range, heightened awareness of tone, mark, pattern. Blue Bermuda triangle of *Le flottage du bois*, is flatness of water below, sympathetic to form, fixes the heart lines of dynamic flow, a killing/activating device.

People, rare creature, spotted up a bygone haystack. Human hand splices found pictures in fantastical feats of nature, manually rotates goat neck to comedy or death, grasps a bird, gripping the neck. Man is past, suggested present, destructive in absentia.

Read left to right two shelf stories dwindle in conclusion, hint at a return to domestic, town life. *Wild Animals at Home*, ruefully tames the fantastical rural replete with cacti, zebra. A single glass plate quietly reasserts the inevitable loop back to *Carland*.

Before leaving homeward, a desk collection, idiosyncratic menagerie. Family portraits as an exercise in masking, by tribal headdress, leaf eclipsed monkey face, defaced statuette, a child who covers the eyes of grandpapa. Oh, and a homely loaf of bread '*Manna*'.

In this artistic territory, only the innocent child, the captured bird, the hunting leopard have eyes, privileged to see, as are we. A riddle? So what does this self-elected, so-called College of Art profess to teach? To hazard a triangulation:

- i) contemplation on the act of looking
- ii) something of the nature of life and death
- iii) with bread to sustain us on our *travails*

To submit to the lesson seeking two triangles, poised for a gold star, for certification.

Catherine Linton

March 2013

[1] *Badlands*, Terrence Malick, 1973

Writer detail:

Catherine Linton is a London based fine artist, currently undertaking the MA at Wimbledon College of Art

catherinelintonfolio.wordpress.com

Venue detail:

[domobaal](#) »

3 John Street London WC1N 2ES

domobaal.com/artists/david-gates-bio.html