London Orphan Asylum: New Art from London
Martin Creed & Hugo Glendinning
Pauline Daly, Jeremy Deller, Matthew Franks
Brian Griffiths, Inventory, Klega, Mark Leckey
Tim MacMillan, Tomoko Takahashi
Denise Webber, Sue Webster & Tim Noble
Curators: Gilda Williams & Clare Manchester

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London Orphan Asylum

All that remains of the London Orphan Asylum, built in 1825 in the East End of this city, is the building's neoclassical portico and colonnade. In 1999 artist Martin Creed made a beautifully understated public work of neon light to adorn its pediment; it reads simply and reassuringly: Everything's Going to Be Alright.

‘London Orphan Asylum’ presents an unexpected picture of London, taking distance from the tired cliches of sensational Brit Pop. This is a more quiet, more thoughtful, more diversified image of London's interdisciplinary and active art scene, centring on the permanently 'transitional' area of the East End.

‘London Orphan Asylum’ pays homage to the the variety and intensity of London art which is habitually flattened out into mediagenic Pop candy art. On view are works which have been seen 'off-centre', in the East End, and are representative of some of the best new art being produced and exhibited here.

In very different ways the artists here all take the debris of the world – the orphan-like extras and sidelines of the world at large – as the basis of their work. Exemplifying the attitude of this 'other side' of London art is the artists relationship to materials, which centres on two general ideas: immateriality and re-use.

The idea of immateriality runs through the quiet work of Martin Creed, whose neon public work is videoed by Hugo Glennindlin as the sun goes down and the message gradually emerges into view; or is seen in the experience of living in the city (Mark Leckey's Britain-wide documentary video on club cultures; Jeremy Deller's two years worth of 'raw footage' drawn from of his daily experiences); or Toshiko Takahashi's video document of a group performance, a day-long public 'marathon' of forty-five changing solitary players in the East End neighbourhood of Shoreditch; or Pauline Daly's diaphanous gold-threaded golf net; or Tim McMillan's tableau of a single 'stop motion' instant between the life and death at the abattoir.

The idea of re-using or recycling materials to create artefacts runs through the other art-works in 'London Orphan Asylum'. Sue Webster and Tim Noble's shadow sculpture/portraits are made of garbage; Kiegl's wall pieces are pictures made of audiotape spinning on an old Walkman; Brian Griffith's' new life forms are made of recycled materials (read junk); Matthew Franks' sculptures are of cheap, durable polystyrene. Artists' group Inventory presents an assisted ready-made of the real contents of lost wallets, each forming a kind of involuntary biography; and Denise Webber re-works the stills from Edwaerd Muybridge's studies of animal locomotion to bring these case-study object-people back to life in video.

‘London Orphan Asylum’ is a stroll through the East End, into its streets, clubs and galleries, documenting the less mediatized new art in London – often misrepresented, but one of the world's thriving and most watched contemporary art centres.

Clare Manchester and Gilda Williams

Editors at Phaidon art press and freelance curators and writers


Jeremy Deller exhibitions include: 'City Racing', London (1993); 'Migrateurs', ARC Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (1996); 'Bring Your Own Wallpaper', W139, Amsterdam (1997); and 'Intelligence', Tate Britain, London (2000).


Tim MacMillan exhibitions include: 'Split Milk', Filmmakers' Co-op, London (1994); 3x3, Watershed Media Centre, Bristol (1996); Dead Horse' Rotterdam Film Festival (1999); New Natural History, Museum of Film and Photography, Bradford, UK (1999).

