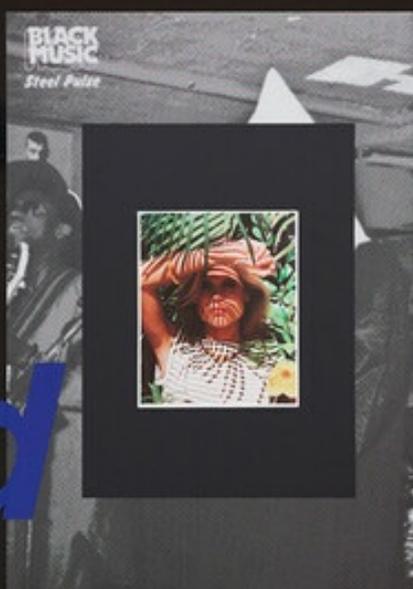


seductive



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London's emerging artists at Jerwood

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London's emerging artists at Jerwood

by George Vasey • 07.11.2018

In recent books, George Monbiot and Rebecca Solnit have written on the urgent need to create new stories. An old one goes a bit like this: the world is run by white men with money and there is little anyone can do about it. A new one may show that it doesn't need to be that way, that a majority – made up of empowered and vocal minorities – can start to shape a more equitable society based on shared rather than individual needs. How do artists tell their stories? Do these narratives change from one generation to the next? The exhibition *Survey* at Jerwood Space, London, brings together early-career artists who are attempting to make sense of our messed-up world. From actual pots to metaphorical potshots, the work is as varied as the topics covered, which include Brexit, climate change, technology and national belonging.

Bodies appear frequently throughout the exhibition. Emma Cousin's *Song Drapes* (2018), features a motley group of corpulent women who are limbering up while they grab, suck and bite each other **FIG.1**. A couple of them seem to be floating away, their bodies discoloured and covered in varicose veins. Skin sags and droops as Cousin put her characters under considerable duress. Flo Brooks's painting *Nobody feels right, so why am I any different?* (2018) **FIG.2**, merges images of incidental and domestic objects with the human body to foreground bodily anxieties. Blocked pipes, hairy legs, butt plugs, heaters, lamps, cleaning products and vape smoke combine with portraits of people engaged in intimate and everyday situations. Brooks's painting spills out from the frame, connected via a network of dodgy plumbing. Leaks and spillages abound as physical blockages stand in for emotional undercurrents.

In *A Track with No Name* **FIG.3**, Simeon Barclay encases fashion photography under semi-transparent coloured Perspex. Stony-faced models merge with our own expectant faces, reflected back at us from the glossy surface. Barclay, in effect, creates a contemporary Claude glass, endowing advertising and fashion imagery with a sublime quality commonly associated with the transcendent ruralism of the eighteenth century. Will Sheridan Jr similarly trades on the opacity of fashion iconography with *Ownership Boxes* (2018), which incorporates reconstructed and painted packaging salvaged from fashion boutiques with Juergen Teller style photographs of trendy twenty-somethings. In another gallery, Sheridan presents a series of oil pastels of an androgynous figure, who looks as if they have stepped out of an early 1980s New

Romantic band or an eighteenth-century Flemish painting. Sheridan's and Barclay's work dramatises the way in which fashion imagery simultaneously compels and resists our gaze.

Joe Fletcher Orr and Lindsey Mendick make work with their families and strike a more emotionally frank tone. Orr's neon work *Artist's Full of Shit* (2018) takes his dad's assertion that Piero Manzoni's art is rubbish by tautologically riffing on the artist's most infamous work (a can of his own excrement). For *I'll Always Love You But I Don't Always Like You* Mendick remakes chintzy objects such as teapots and ornamental animals from her parents' house in clay. While Orr's work tends towards a deadpan conceptualism and Mendick's to a sloppier formalism, there is a shared interest in foregrounding parental philistinism and bad taste to reflect, I think, on class anxiety.



Fig. 1 *Song Drapes*, by Emma Cousin. 2018. Oil on canvas, 225 by 155 cm. (Courtesy the artist; photograph Anna Arca; exh. Jerwood Space, London).

Thomas Goddard's film *The word of mouse (grok your cornea gumbo)* (2018) combines archival footage of old phone boxes, interfaces and Wi-Fi logos, which whizz past at speed to a soundtrack of tribal drumming, techno and dial-up tones. The work is pervaded by the millennial and melancholic, with Goddard's nostalgia for the recent past taking on a vertiginous quality. Hazel Brill generates a feeling of vertigo within her work in a very different way. In *We gathered around the puddle, smiling patiently* **FIG.4** a television monitor, taking the form of a 'personified puddle', is surrounded by fake stones and pot plants. Images of cats, garden centres and swimming pools appear in the pond, while diaristic monologues are delivered through headphones. A voice

recounts somebody passing a kidney stone on a rollercoaster. Images of escape collide with the imagery of roundabouts. We start out somewhere and end up back in the same position, with Brill brilliantly capturing a litany of modern frustrations and thwarted ambitions.



Fig. 2 *Nobody feels right, so why am I any different?*, by Flo Brooks. 2018. (Installation view at Jerwood Space, London; photograph Anna Arca).

Anna Raczynski's film *The Movie Makers* (2018) reflects on gender, community and civic responsibility and is a real stand out in the exhibition. Raczynski appears throughout, interviewing the typically older men who belong to an amateur documentary film club she has recently joined. They meet in a community room at a local Asda superstore and in one scene we see her talking about the difficulty of being a migrant in the United Kingdom during the EU referendum as the scene cuts to a Union Jack flying next to a SALE sign. It is a witty piece of editing, as well as a chilling

reminder of how high the stakes are in our current political stasis. Chris Alton's banner *A Hollywood Film in which Climate Change is Averted* [FIG.5](#) challenges Hollywood's propensity towards dystopian science fiction, and suggests – as Monbiot and Solnit write – that we need to imagine a better tomorrow before we can start to improve our prospects.

Throughout *Survey*, artists are telling their own stories and reclaiming ground in an accelerating world that promises proximity and intimacy but rarely delivers it. From the narrative of technological advancement to the lies of autocratic politicians, every bad ending starts with the promise of a simple solution. The artists in *Survey* variously complicate received narratives, embracing polyphony and nuance: if we start at the same beginning do we always need to have the same ending?

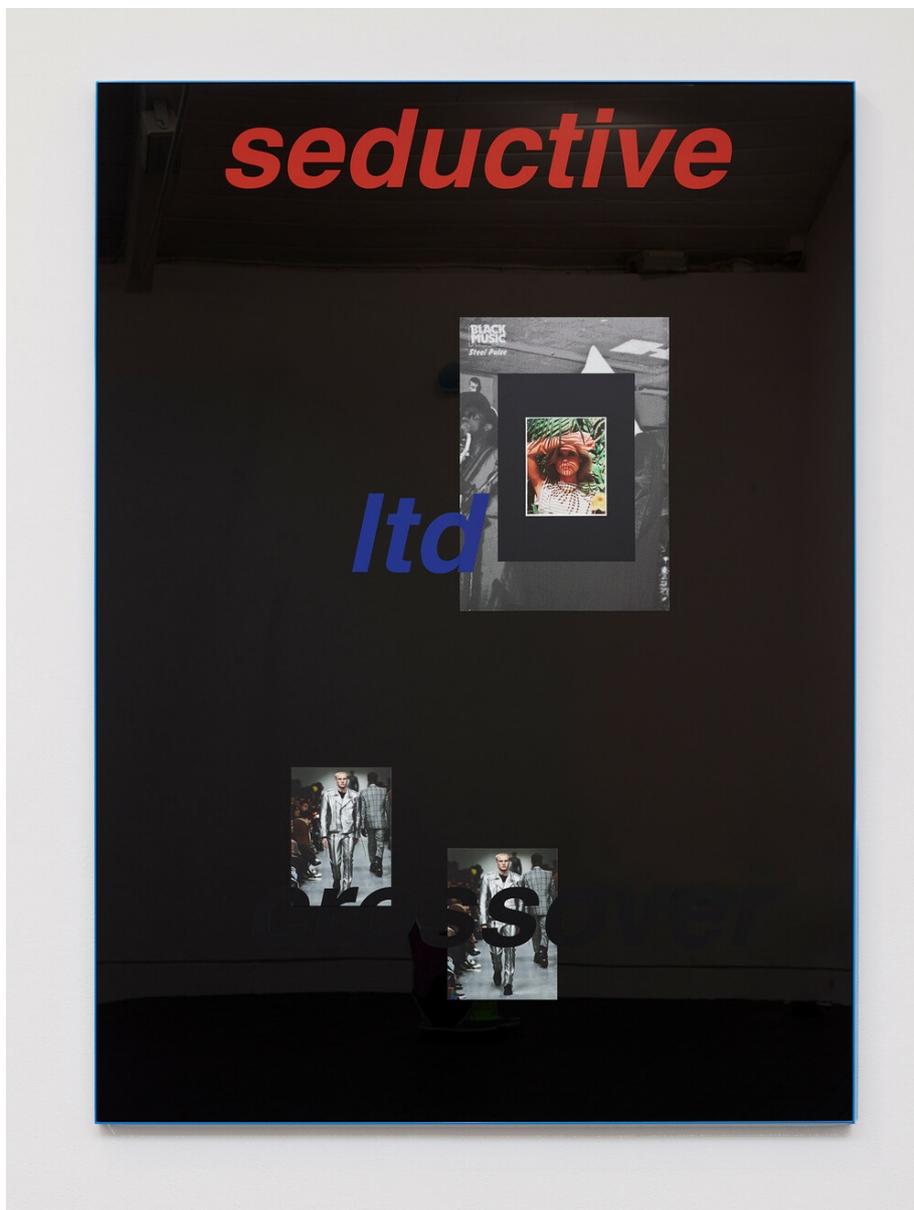


Fig. 3 *A Track with No Name*, by Simeon Barclay. 2018. (Installation view at Jerwood Space, London; photograph Anna Arca).



Fig. 4 *We gathered around the puddle, smiling patiently*, by Hazel Brill. 2018. (Installation view at Jerwood Space, London; photograph Anna Arca).



Fig. 5 *A Hollywood Film in which Climate Change is Averted*, by Chris Alton. 2018. (Installation view at Jerwood Space, London; photograph Anna Arca).

Exhibition details Survey
Jerwood Space, London
3rd October–16th December

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