

White Hot Magazine

Tom Butler, Marion Michell, Alyson Helyer:

Extra-Ordinary

[Core Gallery](#)

C101 Faircharm Trading Estate

8 – 12 Creekside, Deptford

London SE8 3DX

23 April through 8 May, 2011



Humour, ambiguity, intensity and contradiction take the limelight at a South London gallery and confirm there's more to London's art scene than merely what's on north of the Thames.

“Francis Bacon meets Donnie Darko” in an exhibition exploring a “disjointed world of macabre coexistence”. That's how Core Gallery curator, Rosalind Davis, describes *Extra-Ordinary*, a subversive mixed media show by three London artists (Tom Butler, Alyson Helyer and Marion Michell, co-curated by Jane Boyer) diving headlong into the depths of identity and the psyche, the real and the unreal, and the anguish of memory.

What would a set of shoes for a three-legged girl look like? And then, what if an artist represented such a sad little trio of objects as a model made of tissue paper? The result, *Shoes for three-legged girl* (2001) by Marion Michell, is

delicate and beguiling and offers the opportunity to examine a mix of repulsion and pathos in the removed and sterile setting of a (properly lit!) gallery space. Discomfort is sensed without necessarily being experienced.

Such art is fucked up stuff indeed ... but well executed and thoughtful. Monstrosities, the awkwardness of youth and general feelings of anxiety are presented in a poignant light. Michell's pieces particularly shine in this regard, but by no means are the works by Helyer and Butler to be breezed past. Helyer's oil on linen portraits bring dignity to the deformed. And, as with works by Michell, isolation of the subject brings with it the chance to observe without threat. Gouache alterations added to Victorian cabinet cards by Butler do the deformity/dignity mash up with equal skill as well. All three artists expertly tickle the funny bone of dark humour, suggesting that at any time they could activate the viewer's gag reflex with precision but have chosen not to, opting instead to draw the viewer in and have them wonder why certain things might revolt us in the first place.

Galleries in Mayfair, Shoreditch and the East End do a brilliant job keeping the bulk of the art scene hype buzzing north of the Thames, but as *Extra-Ordinary* at Core Gallery in the depths of Deptford (SE8 innit?) demonstrates, worthwhile art flows in all directions. Interested in an art-inspired South London meander? A great time to go is on Slam Friday (last Friday of the month, 6.30-8pm, free with no booking required). Core Gallery would make an excellent starting point for just such an arty expedition – especially if exhibitions of *Extra-Ordinary* calibre prove to be the norm. For a look at the plethora of good galleries within a stone's throw of it visit www.southlondonartmap.com.

Review by Chris Osburn