

South London Art Map - Review: Other Surfaces

OTHER SURFACES @ POPPY SEBIRE

13 JAN – 11 FEB 2012

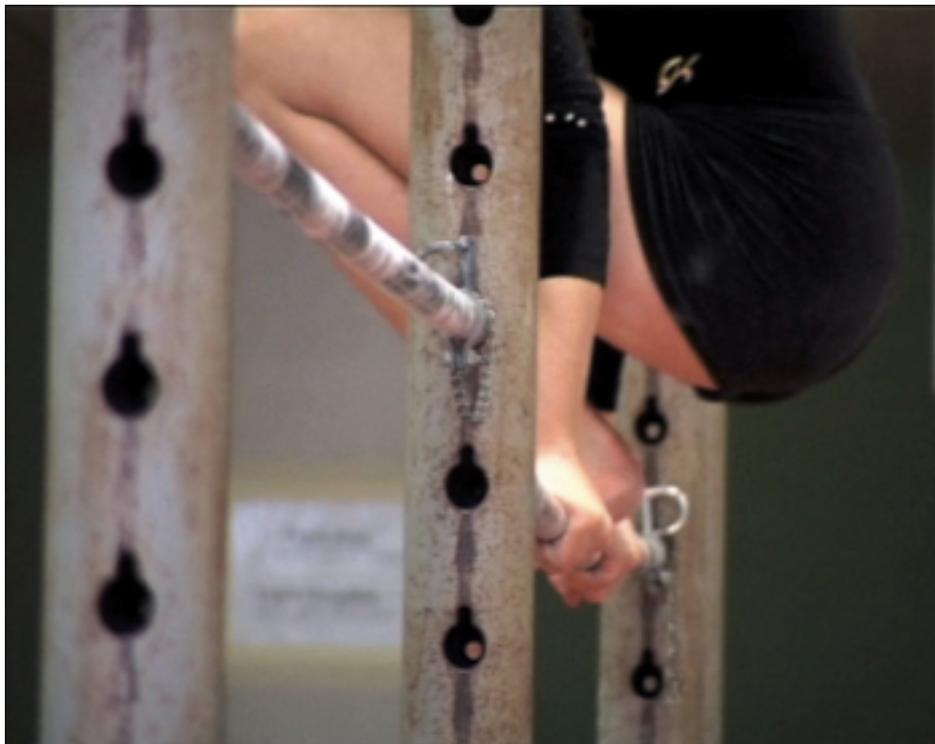
SCREENING EVENT: WED 1 FEB | 7.30PM

www.poppysebire.com

Vanessa Billy | Lloyd Corporation | David Cotterrell | Tom Dale | Clare Goodwin/Paul Harper | Lee Maelzer | Sam Porritt | Magali Reus | John Strotton.

Curated by Rebecca Geldard

'Other Surfaces' offers the audience a refreshing jolt from the increasing tedium of group show conventions. With a frank declaration that 'it is unlikely this set of artists would ever be shown together as a group of object or mark makers' curator Rebecca Geldard delves a little further back, taking the artists' choice of video research processes, rather than the final object as her point of departure. Fittingly, the show's concept was conjured by the curator during a visit to Lee Maelzer's studio where she was shown unedited footage by the artist of Ridley Road recorded from a skateboard. Maelzer's striking ability in paint to capture fleeting moments, snapshots, as if recorded by the memory in a moment of urgency are also communicated in Maelzer's video 'Ground': The camera fleets from object to object then object to pigeon, as if urgently trying to derive some significance from the litter strewn surrounds whilst coming round from a drink induced night in the gutter. A similar materiality manages to ooze through the confines of the lens in Vanessa Billy's 'Learning Body'. An artist whose sculptural installations manage a simultaneous weighty tension and lightness of touch echo the confines of the human body. In 'Learning Body' a fixed camera reveals snippets of gymnasts in training on a bar. We see the preparation and trepidation of the athletes, and in the same frame their tension not qualified by their evident skill is revealed through the contact between flesh and bar. The bar buckles and strains under the weight of the eventually fearless athlete, the tension shifts from the body to the bar in one fell swoop, a moment ceased by the artist. We gain an insight into Billy's preoccupation with the physical limits of materials and material pairings in this split second.



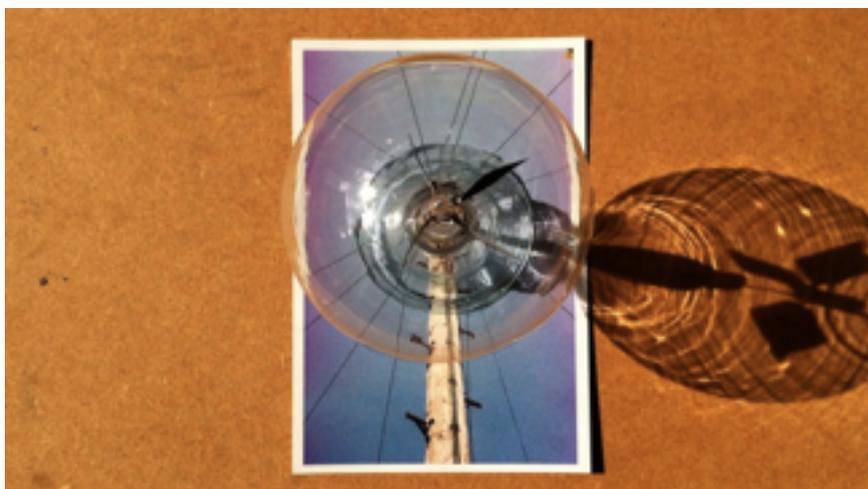
Vanessa Billy, Still from Learning Body, 6 min, 19 sec, 2009

Clearly more comfortable in the medium, we can see David Cotterrell's concerns are more social than material, his usual oeuvre utilises almost every material or technology at his disposal. Usually placing the viewer in socially complex vantage points, 'Hero' seems almost lighthearted by comparison. The video shows our hero, with only a hi-vis jacket for armour he attempts to manage the unruly roads of Shanghai. The order the hero attempts to impose and the utter chaos of the Shanghai roads has a David & Goliath absurdity about it.



David Cotterrell, still from Hero, 4 min 21 sec, 2005

By comparison John Strutton's contribution feels far more emotionally intrusive. The trilogy of films open a window directly into Strutton's driving forces. Language and light are manipulated to equally honest ends to reveal a real sense of tension and that you've seen something about the artist that most would keep firmly tucked away; I felt as if I had read his diary.



John Strutton, still from 'Cactus and Curtains', 6 min 40 sec, 2011

Some of the work here is charmingly raw and frank, the conventions of the media often disregarded in favour of capturing the essence of what propels the artists' respective practices, whether or not these works were ever intended for an audience I don't know. Some works are clearly more polished than others, and the videos here do raise the question that at some point during the artistic process does the artist lose the clarity of their unique vision and sacrifice it in favour of convention? – A gradual dilution of that initial spark so clear in these 'research' works? The charm of this show is the transparency in which the artists' work has been presented, the Pen and Teller of the curatorial realm.

Rachel Price