

Coxhead, Gabriel, "Radical Drawing", TIME OUT LONDON, 22 December 2011.



Radical Drawing

Until Sat Jan 28 *Purdy Hicks, 65 Hopton St, SE1 9GZ*

Art:Galleries: South

By Gabriel Coxhead

Posted: Thu Dec 22 2011

Contemporary drawings can generally be split into two different tendencies. There's drawing as formalist practice - an activity that implicitly records its own process and manufacture. There's a nod to that here in this show, though perhaps in a slightly gimmicky way, with Gavin Turk's drawings formed by interlocking tea-mug ring-stains. Mostly, though, the work here goes in another direction, which is to do with drawing's capacity for reverie and fantasy, for spontaneously channeling the imagination - from the crude, numinous dream-scenes of Andrzej Jackowski, through Alice Maher's animation of surreal shape-shifting creatures, to Marcia Kure's marbled spillages of watercolour, red wine, and other liquids, traced and extended into sinuous, vaguely figurative forms.

None of this, of course, is quite as 'radical' as the show's title claims. About four or five years ago, shows like this were everywhere - most of them seemingly including works by Raymond Pettibon and Marcel Dzama as standard. And, yes, those artists duly feature here too - the former with one of his signature train-as-symbol-of-manifest-destiny pieces, the latter throwing his recurring cast of characters into ever more macabre, unsettling scenarios. Still, few of the previous cycle of drawing shows featured anything like as grandiose a work as the centerpiece here: Keith Tyson's vast, medieval maze-quoting floorplan of an invented university building, with the corresponding key acting as a kind of whimsical, Borgesian inventory of all human knowledge.

Another plus in the exhibition's favour is its international character, going beyond the usual Anglo-centric focus to include artists from Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe. Taken together, it means the show avoids feeling like a throwback - instead, it ultimately functions as an engaging, often extremely witty argument for the continuing importance of drawing as a medium for contemporary art, utterly aside from the vagaries of artistic fashion.