

Mat Collishaw

'Creation Condemned'

Blain|Southern

21 Dering Street, London W1S 1AL

13 October – 17 December 2010

Preview: Tues 6-8pm, 12 October

Blain|Southern opens its London gallery with 'Creation Condemned', an exhibition of new work by British artist Mat Collishaw. For this show, Collishaw juxtaposes potent visions of the natural and supernatural worlds with traditional sculptural forms to explore creation and destruction, beauty and torture.

In 'Performance', a swarm of butterflies are engulfed in flames as they take flight. The violence is unrelenting but has a hypnotic beauty, holding the eye like the embers of a fire. The film is set within an altarpiece: once a glossy display case for the celestial suffering of the saints, now a charred and melancholy acknowledgement of the malice it confines.

Fire is used to different effect in 'Auto-Immolation'. An imposing red orchid suspended in a glass sealed cabinet is licked by a creeping blue flame as it unfolds into life; its petals open to reveal a menacingly beautiful display of vitality in its deathly surroundings. Crimson sap cascades down the orchid's stem and its labellum unfolds coquettishly. Unlike the butterflies, fire appears to give rather than take life, and yet the outcome is the same. Nature takes its inexorable path. The flower is corporeal; however brightly it burns in its lifetime it will go the way of all matter.

'For Your Eyes Only', a three-part video tableaux of a pole-dancer, is set within separate altarpieces. By using three screens Collishaw alludes to Christ on the Cross flanked by two thieves, the dancer's pole recalling the stem of the crucifix. The artist draws a parallel between ancient religious rites and sordid acts of contemporary life to create a composition of explicit allure.

In contrast to these intrinsically digital works, 'Supervilliance' transposes Gian Lorenzo Bernini's baroque masterpiece the Ecstasy of Saint Theresa into a lithophane. Illumination is provided by a scanner that, much the same as a Xerox, roves in an unbroken line behind the sculpture. The



'Supervilliance', 2010
Corian, acrylic, steel, lights, electrical circuitry.
156 X 248 X 15cm © the artist

photocopier is the antithesis to the artistic process; clinical and providing an inferior representation, yet here the artist uses it to gradually reveal the carving in the same manner as the heavenly shafts of light found in religious paintings.

Finally, 'Lost Prophet' shows one of the two monumental Buddha sculptures hewn from the cliffs of Bamiyan, Afghanistan, after it was destroyed by the Taliban in 2001. The Taliban was so enraged by the depiction of a deity other than Allah that they annihilated it with dynamite and rockets. The desecrated Buddha appears only momentarily, requiring the interaction of light and substance to be visible.

Collishaw's work reveals an ongoing preoccupation with representational techniques, how we consume imagery, and with visual devices that beguile the human eye. The artist is typically interested in images which are at once alluring and disturbing, which elicit ambivalent feelings of enchantment and disenchantment, attraction and repulsion.

For further information and images please contact Mark Inglefield
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Notes to editors:

Mat Collishaw

Mat Collishaw (b. 1966) is a key figure in the important generation of British artists who emerged from Goldsmith's College in the late 1980s. He participated in Freeze (1988) and since his first solo exhibition in 1990 has exhibited widely internationally. Collishaw's work is in important museum collections including Tate, London, and Centre Pompidou, Paris. Recent solo exhibitions have taken place at Haunch of Venison (Berlin) (2009), 'Deliverance' Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York (2008), 'Nebulaphobia' Unosunove, Rome (2009), the Freud Museum, London (2009), the British Film Institute (2010) and Raucchi/Santamaria, Naples (2010). Collishaw lives and works in London.

Blain|Southern was established in September 2010 by Harry Blain and Graham Southern. This is the gallery's inaugural exhibition.