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From Floor to Sky: British Sculpture and the Studio Experience, Ambika P3

Monday, 15 March 2010 13:00

Written by Doro Globus

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Foreground: Clone Installation (1980–1982) by Keith Brown. Background film: Communion (2010) by Nina Danino

Photo Michael Maziere

From Floor to Sky looks at a relatively little known, but pivotal, moment in the development of British sculpture: the period in the late 1960s and early 1970s when tutors and students at St Martin's School of Art and the Royal College worked together in challenging traditional attitudes to the medium. New ways of teaching and thinking about sculpture were evolved, and new materials such as fibreglass and plastic introduced. This exhibition focuses on the students of one particular tutor, Peter Kardia, whose radical teaching methods brought politics, theory, perception and perspex into the studio.

The group of 28 former students brings together an extraordinary array of luminaries, including Richard Long, Hamish Fulton, Richard Wentworth, Bill Woodrow, Alison Wilding and many others. But rather than looking only at their student work under Kardia, the show contrasts two works by each artist: one from their earliest period and one current piece. Thus the exhibition resembles a graduate show, but one that illustrates what happens to the artist outside the sheltering art school environment.

Some of the artists have followed a consistent path, extending their early ideas into maturity; others have travelled far from their student



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Clash of the Titans



Just don't say you weren't warned. "The Legend Begins in 3D," it says outside the Odeon Leicester Square in rather boisterous capitals. This is very much episode one of what the moneybags on Mount Olympus, working out of their Hollywood 91601 address, envisage as an all-whizzing, all-banging trawl through the Greek legends. The formula is very much as you were. It's the age-old cinematic derby, yet another epic widescreen face-off between man and special effect.

Written on Thursday, 01 April 2010 08:00
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Abdullah Ibrahim, Barbican Hall



Like Hugh Masekela, pianist Abdullah Ibrahim first emerged as a member of The Jazz Epistles – that seminal, if short-lived, group who at the start of the 1960s were the first to offer a South African take on modern jazz. Both under the stage name Dollar Brand and, following his conversion to Islam, as Abdullah Ibrahim, it's an instinct he's been honing ever since. As early influences such as Ellington and Monk have gradually become less tangible, he has emerged as one of the most distinctive artistic voices of his generation.

Written on Thursday, 01 April 2010 07:30
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ideas. The format of the exhibition becomes a guessing game, as you wonder 'which came first?' and



'what came between?' Keith Brown's beautiful early work *Clone Installation* (1980–82), for instance, is made of many tree trunks thickly sliced, then restacked and glued together. But 30 years later the artist is working in a completely different way with very advanced hologram technology. On the other hand, two Richard Deacons seen side by side – a wooden sculpture made of right angles and clean lines, *Untitled #1* (1977), next to a recent tangle of stainless steel, *Siamese Metal #3* (2008) – show that the forms continue to have a very strong relationship to each other, and the evolution from one to the other is very clear (right: works by Carl Plackman and Bill Woodrow. Photo Michael Maziere).

The exhibition, curated by Kardia himself, is housed in a vast underground former concrete-testing facility (located remarkably close to Baker Street Station), and the scale and materials of this intriguing body of work benefit from being seen in this massive industrial space. The gallery is entered from above, providing a panoramic view of the exhibition before you move into a subterranean world full of large, intriguing structures such as Carl Plackman's *Decoy* (2000), two tables with mysterious cast items hanging from the bottom, or Bill Woodrow's *Untitled* (1971) comprising a tree trunk resting against a photograph on the wall and floor.

If the "then and now" remit has led to a somewhat uneven show, it is one that is well worth seeing and presents an illuminating contrast to Tate Britain's current display, *Sculpture after 1960*, featuring several of the same artists – Deacon, Woodrow and Wilding. While Tate presents these figures as already embedded in the history of British art, *From Floor to Sky* recreates the excitement and experimentation of a dynamic period in British art education.

- [From Floor to Sky](#) is at Ambika P3 until 4 April.

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WHO NEEDS FATHERS?; BBC TWO



Take two sets of separated parents and observe their opposing response to sharing the children. Chris and Angela haven't involved lawyers, and divide childcare equally and amicably. Alex, on the other hand, has spent tens of thousands of pounds on legal fees in order secure access to his four children with Juliette, a woman who was so inured to being dragged through the family courts by her ex-husband (with some justification, on this evidence) that not until fairly late on in the quietly excellent *Who Needs Fathers?* did she notice that she had now been pulled into the court of public opinion – and a trial by television. It gave a whole meaning to the term "in camera".

Written on Thursday, 01 April 2010 07:00
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Swan Lake, Ballet Nacional de Cuba, London Coliseum



In the Cuban National Ballet's *Swan Lake* fourth act, the corps of swans do a curious, aggressive attacking run you don't see in any other production – they lower their heads and charge at Prince Siegfried, with hands fluttering angrily behind them, as if they were the evil magicians, not the creatures under a spell. There is a spell cast over the Cuban Ballet, a 60-year-old spell, which was once a force of astounding light and artistic release, but which is declining into depression.

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