

From Floor to Sky, Ambika P3, London

(Rated 3/ 5)

Reviewed by Laura McLean-Ferris

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Britain has an undersung generation of important living artists, whose work was skipped over when the media became obsessed by youth in the 1990s. Have we forgotten what British art was like just before the YBAs – in the period that falls between Pop Art and pickled sharks? From Floor to Sky, a huge group show, attempts to put this experimental and somewhat unfamiliar time in perspective. Peter Kardia, an influential teacher at St Martins School of Art and the Royal College of Art between 1960 and the early 80s, has curated an exhibition here featuring the work of his former students. Among these are some great Richards: Richard Wentworth, Richard Long and Richard Deacon, alongside Hamish Fulton, Bill Woodrow, and many names less familiar.



MICHAEL MAZIÈRE

Nigel Slight's 'Hut'

There are some strong reminders here of the way in which artists of this generation completely changed the stakes for art – suddenly, art could be a walk, a performance or a sculpture. Looking at the work here provides the viewer with a missing link between the heavy traditionalism that preceded this generation and the "anything goes" attitude that prevails today. It's surprising, however, to be faced with such a concrete sense of 70s Britishness: trees, wood and industry feature heavily. Bill Woodrow's Untitled from 1971 is a branch of wood propped up against a wall, resting against a black- and-white photograph of a branch flying through the air, and a photograph of a grey shadow, reminding you of the strange status of a found object in a gallery – it hovers between solid form and abstract concept. Richard Long's conceptual walks and text pieces, such as the words: "A day's walk across Dartmoor following the drift of the clouds" painted large and high on the warehouse walls, throw the mind out of doors, reminding us of our lack of caprice, our lack of ability to free our minds and bodies to do something so joylessly goalless.

P3 is a huge hangar-like warehouse and the echoing space comes as a great surprise in busy central London. It offers room for a large amount of work, though the presentation is not the best – there are very distracting plinths and labels everywhere. British art around the 70s is a period in real need of re-evaluation, but it's hard not to feel like another gallery or institution might have pulled this off better (though the organisers here have got the ball rolling).

To 4 April (020 7481 9053)