

MANUFACTURE 2

Manufacture 2

John Hansard Gallery, Southampton

24 September – 5 November

Manufacture 2, curated by Zoë Gray and reconstructed from its first appearance, at the Centre d'Art Contemporain du Parc Saint Léger, in Pougues-les-Eaux, looks at production 'in our "post-industrial era"'. But this is more a rebellion against industry than a celebration, which, far from being over, is enjoying a new lease of life across the globe. The artists here are not romantics of old, running away to the countryside. But there's a retreat into waste – waste products and wasting time. Scrap yard, handicrafts and the (mis)firing process are all here as a counterrealm to the efficiency of mechanical engineering.

The partnership Dewar & Gicquel show some pottery, made out of broken-up ceramic bidets, sinks and pipes, and then rekilned, with some brown glaze tipped over it. Inside the Japanese kiln the process goes wrong, and this is the result, say the artists during the press preview, of 'what a failed firing would look like'. Of another pair of 'soup tureens', Daniel Dewar says he is 'very unsatisfied with them'. Like much of the work here, Dewar & Gicquel's is as much about the steps taken to get to the final point. Futility, waste of effort, Sisyphean labours – all the things that manufacturers try to squeeze out of the production process – are foregrounded here.

Michael Beutler has set himself the task of making workbenches not out of wood but of folded and glued paper that he makes and prints himself (with some assistants). On show are the many different processes that Beutler invented to get there, such as a paper-folding machine and a machine that forces out tubes of mushed-up paper soaked in glue. Most of these are redundancies, false turnings that are as much the point of the work as the finished benches. Beutler is cheerfully interested in the idea that there is not a lot you could do on these odd-shaped benches. "Maybe origami?" he says.

Ida Ekblad scavenges the detritus of industrial society on waste tips with her shopping trolley, and she has set some of these bent bits of tin and incomplete frames in a garish, brick-

red concrete, like an archaeology of the present. Ekblad has decorated a long piece of dark cloth by dribbling bleach from her shopping trolley – giving up the decision-making to the accident. Charles Mason's constructions, meanwhile, are a lot tidier. He has some drooping things that turn out to be hard, such as *Happy or Sad* (2011), seemingly an outsize inner tube, its sagging circle making a clown's mouth, but in actuality a loop of black-dyed concrete.

Hedwig Houben plays with some anthropomorphism, too. Her little filmed talk introduces five shapes – cube, sphere, cylinder, pyramid and cone – and goes on to talk about their characters: the cube's rationalism, the cone's desire to come to a point, and so on. It's fun, looking like the animation series *Morph*, and reading like Edwin Abbott's *Flatland: A Romance of Many Dimensions* (1884).

Most of the work here, though, deals with the 'postindustrial landscape' like a Tarkovsky film, or a New Romantic pop video. It is there as a kind of melancholy backdrop that hopes to lend drama. Some have launched their own quasi-industrial processes – but these are as the cargo cults were to Pan American. The wonders of the industrial world are still waiting to be discovered...

JAMES HEARTFIELD

RUTH EWAN

Ruth Ewan: *Brank & Heckle*

Dundee Contemporary Arts

13 August – 9 October

If you were writing on the relationship between contemporary art and politics, Ruth Ewan's practice would be one of your case studies. Ewan has tirelessly worked as a kind of activist-campaigner since her first shows early in the new millennium. On the basis of this exhibition, perhaps what the study might also throw up is the relationship between politics and aesthetics.

Although a number of the works in *Brank & Heckle* have been displayed elsewhere, they contain numerous references to Dundee, where this exhibition is held, and give it a clear sense

of locality. For example, Paul Robeson, the black American singer blacklisted and persecuted because of his association with the Soviet Union, is a figure Ewan has evoked before. Here, archival materials include reviews of his performance at Dundee's Caird Hall in 1930, showing a warm appreciation of his talent and of his visit to the city. In new works Ewan evokes Mary Brooksbank, a poet, songwriter and musician who lived in the working-class world of Dundee's jute mills in the early-to-mid-twentieth century. Ewan worked with students at Menzieshill High School on the subject of Dundee's history, resulting in students drawing images about Brooksbank and other political topics. *Mary (Lewis)* (2011) is a wall painting taken from one such drawing, where Brooksbank is covered in a patchwork outfit with handwritten panels announcing things such as 'I like protesting a lot' – quite funny.

Additionally there is a replica of *Negro Spiritual* (1924), a sculpture of Robeson by Italian American Antonio Salemme that had its own history of censorship. Then *Them That Plants Them Is Soon Forgotten* (2010–11) is an installation of 'Paul Robeson heritage tomato plants', originally named by someone whose own story is now forgotten.

Ewan's practice is carefully researched and provides a sensitive reminder of political and historical moments that have been buried by mainstream culture, moments averse to the power structures of the past and hardly fashionable in today's conservative climate. A 'brank', indeed, is a scold's bridle, used to silence women in the Middle Ages; a 'heckle' that familiar form of open and vocal antagonism that might be seen as its antithesis. But perhaps it's the form the antidote takes here that might be worth thinking about. There is something aesthetically quite flat about this exhibition that makes you wonder if the baby wasn't thrown out with the bathwater in the 'anti-aesthetic' critical climate of the 1980s. If you are invited to *look* at sculptures and installations in order to (politically) engage with subject matter, perhaps there needs to be more of an analysis of the display methods used. Can visual objects evoke the kind of spirit that might help to bring about positive change? Standing out from the other works, *A Jukebox of People Trying to Change the World* (2003–) airs 1,500 of the 2,200 protest songs Ewan has been amassing. You feel energised by the music, and certainly, being energised is no bad thing in a climate of such fatalism.

JAMES CLEGG



Charles Mason
 (see *Manufacture 2*)
Happy or Sad, 2011 (installation
 view, John Hansard Gallery,
 Southampton). Courtesy the artist

Ruth Ewan
Cone of Power (Margaret),
 2010 (foreground), green baize
 fabric, dimensions variable;
Nae Sums, 1911–2011 (background),
 plywood, dimensions variable.
 Installation view, Dundee
 Contemporary Arts. Photo:
 Ruth Clark. Courtesy the artist



For the past three years the particle detector OPERA has timed neutrinos fired from CERN, Switzerland toward its lead sheets at Gran Sasso, Italy. And for the last three years the neutrinos have arrived early. Breathlessly and tachycardially early. Impossibly early. The neutrinos appear to have travelled faster than light particles would travel if light

particles could travel through the 730 kilometres of quartzite and affogato mud. And this October the OPERA team published their results paper. Their data show that the neutrinos arrived at the Gran Sasso detector 2.34 milliseconds after leaving CERN. But the team's relativity model predicts that light leaving CERN would arrive at Gran Sasso at the later time of 2.4 milliseconds. That's a 60 nanosecond delay between the neutrinos and the predicted light. So the light would arrive a full nanominute late. On these scales that's outrageously late. That's Godot in traffic late. And that doesn't fit the model. But the Italians have checked and repeated the experiment. For three years. 15,000 times. And still the outcome has remained the same: neutrinos can move faster than light, if they travel through enough continental soil.



The John Hansard Gallery in Southampton is hosting its first exhibition of this university year this month. It's called Manufacture 2. It's the sequel to the popular French show Manufacture, and it's curated by one of the original show's co-curators, Zoe Gray. The leaflet doesn't say whether the art or the artists have been changed between this exhibition and the original show, but the theme does remain the same. The leaflet provides a little exposition in its précis. Europeans don't care how their goods are made anymore. How their cafetieres are plugged; how their Vespers are jerry-tuned. And the English are starting to show the same indifference toward their consumer heritage. And this has irked the Manufacture team, so they've brought the show to the UK.

It's a four room exhibition. The entrance room is the largest room, and the largest artwork it contains is the Swede Ida Ekbal's And So The Bells Be Weeping Dear Trolley's Death Knell. It's a river of black unparticular fabric, lying on the floor, supported at one end by an iron stalk. The fabric has been stained by the wheels of a shopping trolley that had been pushed through bleach before being pushed by the artist over the fabric. The effect is so-so. Sparkler-spins on the tacky floor. It would require too much commitment from a living-room, and it would rot in a garden, so it slouches in that bracket of unbuyable sculpture that looks perky in a gallery, but knows it isn't getting adopted any day soon. In the elbows of the fabric are works also by Ekblad, variously titled, squares of

fast-set concrete into which the artist has dropped manufactured objects, that each cast toward the theme.



Emmanuelle Laine's *Effet Cocktail* has a concept. It's one of those meta-media concepts. The photographer André Morin has photographed Laine's artwork, and these photographs of the artwork are the artwork. The result is sculpture without the z-axis. This idea isn't as Duchampian as the leaflet makes it out

to be, but the photographs are effective in their own static, catalogue way. Of the rest, *Happy or Sad*, by Charles Mason, is the most engaging. A dusty concrete loop and a translucent Perspex sheet that pose by themselves in a white-walled room. Abstract sculpture can go quite gonzo and Ikea-ish, but Mason's works are confident, contrasted and original-looking. Michael Beutler's *La Cacahuete* is the most inaccessible piece. An armoury of fluted paper and card set into wooden frames among foothills of scrap. Huge, under-finished, gummy and intimidating.

The truth of *Manufacture 2* is that it survives mostly on its own leaflet's mini-essays and explications. Since there are no wall-cards, the show would die a very modern, solipsistic death without these explanations. The notes come over as qualifying, necessary soapboxes for the absent artists. Which makes for an aching-arm lunch-hour. You'll exit as you entered – insouciant toward European factory modus and build-line economics – but you'll have been taught and teased, lectured and leaned on, schooled and slammed the full way by the all-knowing leaflet. It's an apple-tree moment at the front desk.

The paper that the OPERA team published still hasn't been refereed. It will nearly definitely turn out to contain an experimental error. Neutrinos, almost massless, chargeless and spinless, are notoriously difficult to test on. The evidence will fall. The crucial scientific scepticism will abide. But there is still a chance of a breakthrough, a glister of a revolution. Of new, greater science. Here's hoping.

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CHRONIQUE
ACTU DES
GALERIES

Mise en forme

La construction des sentiments

Cortex Athletico prolonge l'exposition du sculpteur anglais Charles Mason jusqu'au 22 décembre. Intitulé *Hanging Together*, ce solo show



caoutchouc, pour créer des formes dont l'élégance et l'apparente légèreté semblent parfois contredire la lourdeur des matériaux. La pièce *Hung up*, de dimensions 180 x 44 cm, présente une langue de béton accrochée au mur. Son allure générale évoque un bout de ruban aux deux extrémités jointes, et dont la gravité aurait dessiné la courbe du repli. La surface intérieure est recouverte de tessons de céramique blanche, quand la partie externe est laissée en béton brut. Les jeux d'opposition entre la lourdeur du matériau et la délicatesse de la forme, la finition de la surface interne et la rudesse de la texture du béton, créent un équilibre incertain. Un mouvement de balance et d'ambivalence souvent à l'œuvre dans le travail de Charles Mason. Il est dit que ce serait l'image d'une larme qui aurait inspiré au plasticien la forme oblongue de cette sculpture. Une référence soutenue par le double sens du titre *Hung up*, littéralement « accroché » ou, par extension, « accroché amoureuxment ». L'accent sentimental de cette formule renforce la tonalité mélancolique qui teinte plus globalement cette exposition. À l'image de ces gaines de mousse en caoutchouc protégeant un arc de bambou accroché au mur par une chaîne, dans la sculpture *Loving you Forever*, la mélancolie se révèle ici à la fois sensuelle et enchâssée dans une lourdeur enveloppante.

Charles Mason, *Hanging Together*, jusqu'au jeudi 22 décembre, Cortex Athletico.
Renseignements
05 56 943 189 www.cortexathletico.com

regroupe sept pièces récentes dans l'espace de la galerie. Les compositions de Charles Mason découlent d'un procédé d'assemblage. Elles marient des fragments d'objets usuels et de mobilier à du béton, du Plexiglas, de la céramique, ou encore de la mousse en