

BARRY REIGATE

Barry Reigate: *Equation*
Paradise Row, London
9 September – 8 October

'I am a pessimist', writes Barry Reigate in the catalogue essay for this show. No news there if you're familiar with the English artist's deceptively colourful earlier paintings. These present high and low culture twirled together and, seemingly, devalued into an all-absorbing crassness: Porky Pig's head on an art brut body, encircled by bright Hirst dots and Twombly-ish scribbles, or – in the ones Saatchi favours – cartoonish mountains of pneumatic breasts, candy canes and the white-gloved Mickey Mouse hands that were one of Philip Guston's trademarks. With these works, Reigate manages to be attention-grabbing and piggyback on other artists' work while seemingly lamenting the cheap tactics an artist might use to grab attention. Pessimism doesn't preclude pragmatism, clearly.

In his latest show Reigate intermittently turns more austere referential, serving up modular geometries in the form of drawings and segmented, painted-concrete sculptures: works that speak the language of Sol LeWitt, Donald Judd and Carl Andre but are, in fact, based on decontextualised maths diagrams for Reigate's daughter's SAT tests. *Untitled (Pattern, Concrete)* (all works 2011) is a floor-based concrete sculpture based on seven interlocking polygons, its parts coloured with thinned oil and suggesting the absentminded filling in of a schoolchild. The work reverberates with both the art-historical past – which returns as a kind of mordant ghost – and a bathetic sense that whatever significance these patterns have as art now is pointedly circumstantial. It's really tempting, when first confronted with such works, to characterise them as sporting in the ruins and move on, sighing. Still, I don't think that's quite what Reigate is getting at here.

The idea of a 'test', inherent in the scholastic designs, pushes the work towards a kind of latent empiricism: not declaring a void, but investigating what this language might still be used for. In his text, pointing up his use here of the basic construction materials of concrete and plywood, Reigate widens the context, alluding to the UK riots of the past summer when discussing 'the link between healthy social structures and keeping buildings from being burned down'. In a series of modular paintings, meanwhile, he repurposes a commercial image

– a cartoon wolf used on advertisements for Bisto gravy – repeating it on canvases that are hectic melees of dribbles, aerosol graphics of clown shoes and the geometric forms seen elsewhere. Again, there's an astringent rehearsing and conflating of earlier high-art styles like Abstract Expressionism, Minimalism and Pop, all returning as style, as emptied-out aesthetics that bleed into each other. The wolf, for Reigate, is a symbol of capitalism, but whatever story his work might be starting to tell keeps getting muddled as the creature's face is subjected to repeated modulations – being whited or silvered out, for example.

What emerges, then, is something that feels a bit more serious than Reigate's previous disquisitions on cultural decline: a time- and place-specific evocation of sociopolitical precarity via entangled, undermined and emptied-out aesthetics, tiers of former orders collapsing into each other. *Untitled (Equations)* (2011), with its dematerialising wolves, its lashings of graffiti, its thrown paint and its floating blocks and molecular systems, might stand for the show as a whole – confusion and dissolution orchestrated, former solidities melting into violence-laced air. I don't much want to look at it, but that doesn't necessarily mean Reigate has failed.

MARTIN HERBERT

EDDIE PEAKE

Eddie Peake:
The Loving Clutches of My Hands
Southard Reid, London
3 September – 1 October

It's odd to note that in the last decade, art that addresses the experience of sexuality, gender and the desiring body seems to have moved out of the critical spotlight. The politics of identity aren't what they used to be, and the radical moment of identity politics in art has largely dissipated since the confrontational divisions that defined the 1980s and 90s.

But it's equally interesting to note how the social experience of pleasure, and its relationship to a mobile and extended sexuality, appears to have been rediscovered by a generation of younger artists through a new hedonism of form and medium. Eddie Peake's work, for example, lays this on thick: his is a tasty world to inhabit, full of flesh and acid colours and knowing art references. For *The Loving Clutches of My Hands*, Peake has built a gallery-within-a-gallery, installing a perimeter of flesh-coloured plaster stud-wall into Southard Reid's already compact gallery space. Rectangular apertures allow a voyeur's partial view of works hung on the gallery's true walls. So along one side, four openings line up with four combinations of monochrome photographs overlaid by zingy,

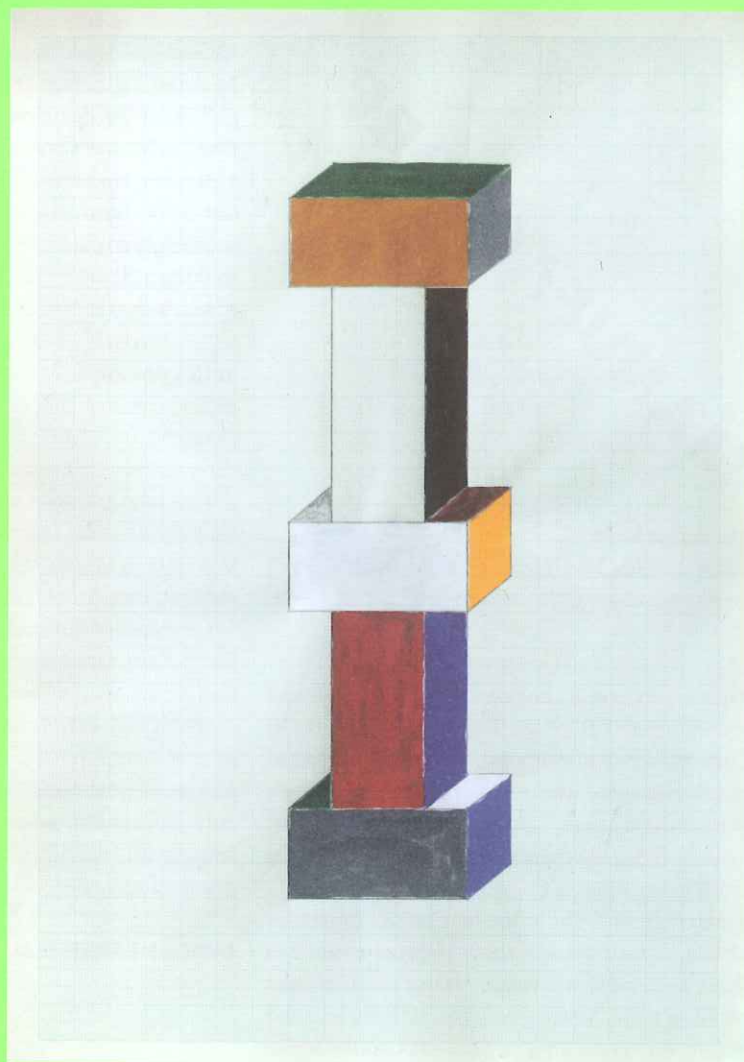
1980s-pastel-toned paintings. The photographs are of the calves, hand, bum and profile of a tousle-haired young man; one painting has a palm-tree graphic picked out of the purple and mint, another has Memphis Design-style sticks cascading across skewed blocks of beige and terracotta, and the last two sport, respectively, the text 'P's' and 'Eddie Peake'.

Decor, Miami 1980s-retro, *contrapposto* nudes and look-at-me self-reference. Posing, posturing and imposture. Peake deftly spins a yarn made of different historical strands of camp and homoerotics. The biggest mistake would be to take anything too seriously here, but then it's as if Peake is toying with the risk of making an authentically inscrutable position out of the slippery surfaces of artifice and masquerade that usually signify sexual identity. 'Eddie Peake Thing' shouts another rainbow-striped canvas, piggybacking that odd bit of slang grammar used to express the self-evidence of personal identities that can never be shared: "You'll never understand, it's a black/gay/female/Jewish thing."

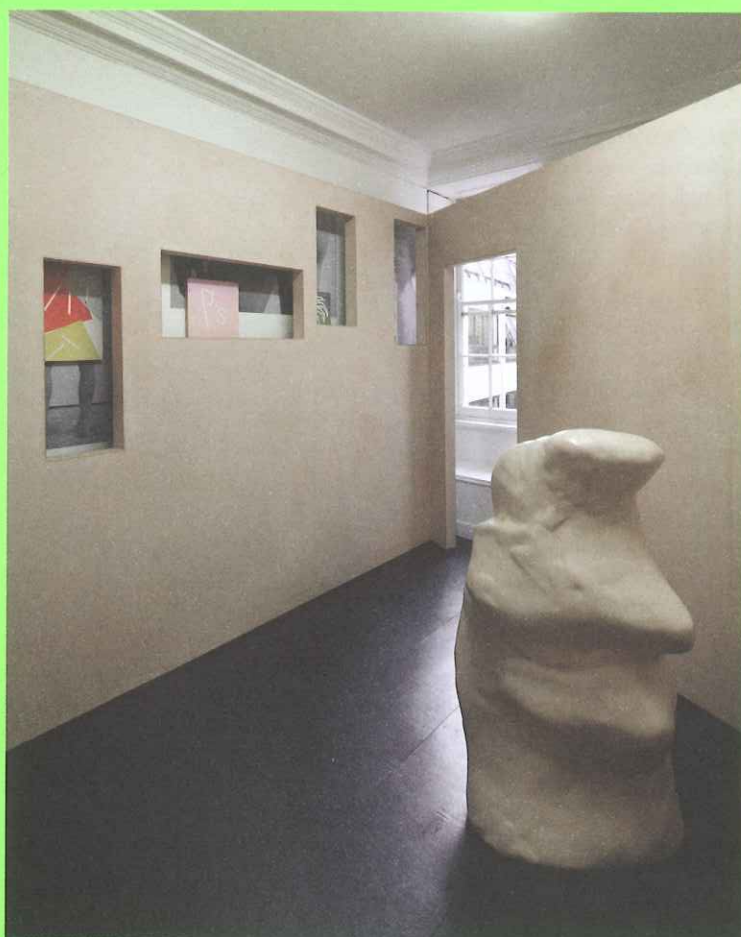
It's definitely an in-between thing. The 'Eddie Peak' painting forms part of a work ostentatiously titled *Transsexual* (all works 2011), and liminal nonidentity is also at the heart of the spray-can-and-plastic-bag pairing of *Winking Face* and *Eye*. *Winking Face* is a mass of spray-canned swirls of colour fixing a smiley-face arrangement of plastic bags to the wall, one having been peeled away to leave a blank area, like a 'wink'. *Eye* is the removed plastic bag, framed, a small open fold making for another 'eye'. Positive, negative or the dissolution of both, they recall Duchamp's androgynous concept of the infrathin.

All of this circles the only sculpture in the room, *There Is No Such Thing As an Equivalent*, which, when paired with title of the room-installation itself, *An Attempt to Find a Satisfactory Accompanying Verbal Language*, further gestures to the logic of duality and dualism. The sculpture, a formless, Rodinesque Jesmonite phallus, looks like a chunk of marble half-carved and then abandoned. Just emerging from its contours are two ample hemispheres: they could be an arse, or they could be boobs, and in their shifting, flickering instability, they – like the rest of the show – flirt with identity just as much as they evade it.

J.J. CHARLESWORTH



Barry Reigate
Untitled (Drawing 3), 2011,
gouache and pencil on graph
paper, 30 x 21 cm, unique.
© the artist. Courtesy the artist
and Paradise Row, London



Eddie Peake
*The Loving Clutches of My
Hands* (installation view), 2011.
Photo: Guy Archard. Courtesy the
artist and Southard Reid, London