

Newcastle upon Tyne: Space Between Us at Vane

Over two temporary gallery spaces and three offsite locations, Space Between Us brought together works by twenty artists based in the Netherlands and the northeast of England. Around a framework of geographical distance and a theme of connection and dislocation between people and their environment, works fitted into a number of unspecified subcategories, the most dominant of these perhaps best described as 'reality TV and documentary'.

If you like your reality TV 24hr, then Edwin Zwakman's The kitchen is for you: like the best of the genre, this live webcast from the artist's studio in Amsterdam shows that in the real world very little happens most of the time. The streamed footage actually features a model of a white Formica kitchen - the changing light conditions are real enough, but otherwise this is fakery, a blur between fact and the fiction.

Hermelinde Hergenbahn's Day in day out IX is filmed by day from a hidden camera placed high above a city-centre street. After dark, the captured footage is projected back onto the pavement, onto the very spot portrayed in fact. If you come back at the right time you might even bump into your filmic version from earlier in the day. Hergenbahn's work mixes past with present by capturing time for all eternity.

Francis Gomila's film is similarly shot from a high vantage point, this time through a tower-block window. Night out documents a late-night tussle between a drunken man and his girlfriend. As the silent action unfolds, we become part-voyeur part-detective. After the male protagonist is shoved to the ground by his female assailant things break up, and we follow the journey of the 'wounded' male who staggers away in search of a taxi, then wanders back again only to be thwarted by vigilant police officers. As melancholic music plays, he disappears off into the shadowy no man's land at the back of some shops and the camera pans up to the lights of city limits. Is this the Newcastle odyssey - people come into the city, they get pissed up on booze, they cop off, have a fight and drift drunkenly back to whence they came?

AP Komen/Karen Murphy's Too much reality whisks us off to a small island in southeast Asia where we catch up with a group of travellers who each in turn spends a night alone in the mysterious, and apparently haunted, Hut number 13. The hut itself is here in the gallery space, so before watching the travellers' video diaries, we can take a look around and see what all the fuss is about. It's furnished with a mix of practical and leisure items...there's a toothbrush, a radio...oh and plenty of Thai porn to entertain the weary backpacker. The hut's real power, revealed through the video diaries, is to emphasize its tenants' sense of themselves - nothing like a night alone in a haunted hut to make you think about who you really are. And maybe that's what reality TV is all about, its subjects hyperreal caricatures of themselves - forced to confess their innermost fears and darkest secrets.

Stephen Palmer is an artist based in Newcastle upon Tyne.

Various artists: Space Between Us, Vane, Newcastle upon Tyne, November 2003; Space Between Us was a project by Vane and was curated by Una Henry and Thomas Puetz of SMART Project Space in Amsterdam.

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Hermelinde Hergenbahn, Day in Day out IX (Newcastle), 31 October - 9 November 2003; projection took place on Lower Pink Lane, Newcastle; courtesy VANE



Francis Gomila, Night Out, 2002, DVD; courtesy VANE



AP Komen / Karen Murphy, Too Much Reality, 2003, installation shot; courtesy VANE