



JONATHAN PARSONS

“ZED’S DEAD”

PRIVATE VIEW THURSDAY 4 OCTOBER 6 – 9PM **EXHIBITION** 5 – 24 OCTOBER 2012

THE ARCH GALLERY, 289 RAILWAY ARCHES, CAMBRIDGE HEATH ROAD, LONDON E2 9HA

The diversity of Jonathan Parson’s practice can be misleading, even confusing but then so can the diversity of the world we live in. It becomes clear that it is precisely this aspect that not only fascinates him but drives his output.

“My work is only satisfying if it succeeds in producing image objects, everything I do is about mapping, tracking across a picture, masking, tracing, bending flat materials into shapes, fixing colours or working with given sources, cutting through the picture plane, trying to glimpse that artificial, alternative reality that art can produce.”

One would imagine that coming from Goldsmiths’ YBA generation that Parsons is firmly rooted in the conceptual rhetoric emerging from that school, so it is a particular pleasure to discover his consummately technical drawings and paintings in which he give more than a passing nod to the seductive qualities that make painting so enduring, *“One might ask why use a technique employed by medieval craftsmen – paint? Simply because nothing else is both real in and of itself and the means by which one can duplicate [the illusion] reality”* and indeed it is so, one is reminded that the lavish food on a wealthy Dutch merchant’s table, the intricate embroidery and gossamer veil over a Renaissance duchess, are all simply the expert manipulation of paint.

Thus in some ways, Parsons can be regarded as a traditional artist turning his hand to astonishing feats of illusion and in others as taking up the modernist mantle of the inherent material qualities of paint. However Parsons glides apparently effortlessly between the real and the abstract, the theory and the application in a way that can only be described as totally contemporary. The connection that runs through the work is Parsons’s investigation-obsession into the notion of signs, patterns, symbols, conventions, perception and meaning. The way in which we seem programmed to ‘de-code’ the world around us. *“Seeing happens when you try to understand what it is you are looking at.”*

For Parsons the world we live in is a series of such signs acting in a similar way in which an animal footprint is followed by the hunter. As a species we are adept at interpreting a multitude of significations embedded in our environment. Colours themselves are signs, the naming of day and night, pigments of the earth, the sky and sea, and the ability to discriminate between various fruits and flowers. Parsons paintings and drawings are based on photographs of images he chooses to recreate from bits and pieces of our world. It becomes clear that they are anything but abstract. Our role is hence one of interpretation, the way in which we read the series of signs and answer the questions arising from them.

For this exhibition work has been selected that highlights several aspects of Parsons practice and the links between them. The new sculpture *All is Vanity* is based on the 7 by 5 dot matrix display format, it is equally a play of material understanding and interpretation of words, as well as being literally a ‘sign’ appearing like an advertising hoarding.

The *Disc* paintings connect visually to the dot matrix and have a sculptural quality as they are made on birch ply, but the significance is on the liquid painting process such as brush marks and dripping. The drip patterns are automatically produced instead of being contrived but even these works are based on optical phenomenon Parsons has ‘observed’ and ‘recreated’.

The colours may look arbitrary but are not simply there for their pleasing aesthetics. read from the top down they set out the Berlin and Kay evolutionary sequence of basic colour terms.

The *Hazard* drawings are based on photographs of found hazard tape meticulously drawn and coloured so that the original is a cipher. These *Reverse* drawings also relate technically to the exhibition's painting *Zed's Dead* (a line from from the 1994 film *Pulp Fiction*) so-called as they reverse the figure-ground conventions and reject the idea of a picture as constituting a painterly composition.

Jonathan Parsons (b. 1970, England) works in London. He studied at West Surrey College of Art and Design and received his BA from Goldsmiths' College in 1992. He has exhibited internationally, with solo exhibitions including at Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth (2008); Kontainer Gallery, Los Angeles (2005); England & Co with Jason Wallis-Johnson Percy Miller Gallery, London (2003); Richard Salmon (2002). Recent Group exhibitions include *Mind the Map*, London Transport Museum (2012); *Meanwhile*, John Hansard Gallery, Southampton (2012); *Abigail Reynolds and Jonathan Parsons: a Dialogue on Landscape and Constable*, Salisbury Arts Centre (2011); *Double or Quits*, 335 Wick Road, London (2010); *The Golden Record*, The Collective Gallery, Lincoln and Edinburgh (2008-9); *Jerwood Sculpture Prize*, Jerwood Space, London (2007). His work can be found in the Arts Council Collection, Government Art Collection, Norwich Castle Museum, The Leverhulme Trust and Saatchi Collection.

Notes to Editors:

The Arch Gallery has become one of London's most exciting platforms for local and international artists. Set amongst a backdrop of East London's art and culture scene, it was originally a railway arch now stripped, back to its rawest form and transformed to juxtapose its industrial surroundings including double height curved ceilings, brickwork, corrugated steel and glass shop front. The Arch Gallery seeks to offer a space to inspire creativity within the community and 2012 has seen the gallery develop multidisciplinary exhibitions and events including, pop-up cinema, performance, concerts, banquets, workshops and competitions.

To keep up with all of our latest events follow the Arch Gallery on twitter @ArchGalleryUk, and check out our website www.thearchgallery.co.uk.

The Arch Gallery, 289 Railway Arches, Cambridge Heath Road, London E2 9HA
Tel: 0207 613 3599 info@thearchgallery.co.uk

Nearest Tube: Bethnal Green

Exhibition Dates: 5-24 October 2012 Open hours: Weds-Sat 12-5pm and by appointment.

Catherine Loewe is a London based contemporary art curator. She has previously worked at Waddington Galleries, Anthony d'Offay Gallery, Christie's and Flash Art Magazine. In 2008 she established an independent arts company producing innovative exhibitions and events. With a track record for spotting talent, she is a dedicated supporter of emerging artists. Catherine has served on the Tate Gallery Patrons Acquisitions Committee and advises private, corporate and public art collections.

For further information or images please contact catherine@loewecontemporary.com