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Yuri Pattison

SON GALLERY, LONDON, UK



'focal-plane', 2012, installation views

Son Gallery is a small space dedicated to lens-based work that is tucked away in the Copeland Industrial Estate in Peckham. The setting was an apt one for Yuri Pattison, a young artist whose work examines the ways in which new media is 'manufactured'. Two vitrines dominated the pale grey space, their companion packing crates positioned close by, one of which partially obscured the photographs taped to the back wall. In each glass case was an LCD monitor – the sort you find in foyers spewing short promotional videos – that had been stripped to its mechanical bones. Much of his footage is recorded on an iPhone, interspersed with clips found on Tumblrs and other social networking sites (like his work with the collective Lucky PDF, although the tone here is more sombre). The resulting lo-fi aesthetic was matched by the exposed mechanisms of display: the USB stick flashing on the side of one screen, the flecked grey packing fabric that had been folded underneath it. Wires trickled down from the sides of the display cases like the tubes of a fish tank, making the screens into strange animals within.

Pattison's videos, like Joseph Beuys's vitrines, feature everyday items that point to the extraordinary in the ordinary. (Although their exact provenance wasn't mentioned, I suspect that the vitrines here once housed Beuys's 1968 work *Fat Corner* [Process], which was donated to Artists' Rooms by Anthony d'Offay in 2008.) Pattison noted that the aerial footage of the wreckage of the Fukushima Power plant, which features in one of his works, reminded him of the moon-landing footage, except here the cratered surface is a dystopian-industrial landscape.

This was spliced with garish clips including a holographic cigarette advert and an excerpt from a Greek teleshopping channel in which a ruby ring revolves against a magenta (green-screened) background. Ripped of any context, these clips were reduced to endless surface, flattened together into the category of 'content'. If they made for surprisingly compelling viewing then it was a testament to how cultural attention spans have been conditioned by the consumption of digital media.

This influence was best expressed in the display of Pattison's photographs of urban detritus: an abandoned watchtower on the outskirts of an airport; a telecommunications shack botched together from two freight containers clad in corrugated steel; a mound of rubble heaped on the deserted Olympics site in Athens. The five variously sized prints were hung so that they resembled an Apple computer screen when a number of different operational windows have been minimized to give the user an overview of their running programmes. The gesture was in contrast to the analogue medium: shot on 35mm film these prints were developed in a traditional darkroom. Pattison's allusion to the culture of digital technology was a reminder of how insatiable the appetite for images has become, and of the influence this has had on artists working today. For example, an exhibition by Erik Kessels in Amsterdam last November concluded with an avalanche of paper, after he printed out every photo uploaded onto Flickr over a 24-hour period.

If this show had a 'focal-plane', as Pattison titled it, then it was the idea of 'ways of watching' – John Berger updated for a digital culture. Peering down through a glass museum case, the visitor was made to consider how removed this cool act of viewing was from the artist's original encounter with these videos on his laptop (an intimacy written into the very product name). Like Lauren Hartke in Don DeLillo's novella *The Body Artist* (2001), who becomes obsessed with a live video feed from the edge of a two-lane road in Finland, Pattison revels in 'the deep silence of other places, the mystery of seeing over the world'. He shares a fixation with the Internet's capacity to collapse space and time; his works critically examining its ability both to quicken thought and deaden the mind. 'It was an act of floating poetry', Hartke comes to realize, 'it was best in the dead times'.

Eleanor Nairne