

Burke, Harry, *'Private Eye: Harry Burke around Condo London', Diary, Artforum, 18 January 2020*

# ARTFORUM

DIARY

## PRIVATE EYE

January 18, 2020 • London • Harry Burke around Condo London 2020

"WE FOUND A CAFE with friendly staff and pleasant, inexpensive food," recounts the unnamed, flâneuring narrator of Patrick Keiller's 1994 film *London*, "but there was no sign of anyone writing poetry." These words came to mind as I meandered around the preview for *Condo London*, a gallery-share initiative whose fifth iteration showcased seventeen local spaces and nineteen international counterparts. *London* elegizes a civic spirit vanquished by Thatcherism, and as the city buckles again under the intemperate cruelty of its former mayor's prime ministership, its resonance endures—on Routemaster buses and in supermarkets, if not in art galleries.

"I rushed here to see the ostrich feather duster," lilted a visitor at mother's tankstation (hosting Los Angeles's *Château Shatto*), as dealer Finola Jones graciously ushered viewers around Yuko Mohri's assemblage of wires connecting a gleaming silver trumpet to a feather altar cleaning brush, which twitched intermittently. Next door at *Project Native Informant*—hosting Jakarta's *ROH Projects*—a spinning vinyl record played the amplified heartbeat of artist Bagus Pandega's two-month-old son, in an eruption of intimacy and a beautiful decay of biopolitical borders that resonated with Flo Brooks' sassy cartoons of urban blight.

At Kate MacGarry in Shoreditch, *Galerie Barbara Weiss* had installed paintings by Susanne Paesler; I was paused by her smart, lacquer-on-aluminum tartan pattern, a meditation on the modernist reproducibility and patrilineal inheritance of high fashion. Hamishi Farah's velveteen picture of a moss-green parasite hummed near a Danica Barboza sculpture and painting by Justin Caguiat at *Arcadia Missa*, in a collaboration with New York's *Lomex*. At the Soho Sichuan restaurant *Barshu*, Rózsa Farkas handed me a menu and instructed me to order for two globose tables of artists, including Lewis Hammond, Reba Maybury and Juliette Blightman. The seating plan then repeated itself around the DJ booth at the afterparty, at the nearby, members-only *Union Club*, where at some point I stopped taking notes.

Memories returned to me the following morning like emails on a Sunday. Cheered by an Americano and *Sfogliatella* from the neighboring *Wedding House Patisserie*, I headed to *The Sunday Painter* (enchancing paintings by Joshua Armitage, courtesy of Lulu, Mexico City), before a flashback to



mother's tankstation's Finola Jones and curator Richard Birkett.

dancing with Torey Thornton guided me east to their solo exhibition at *Modern Art*, where I was impressed by their jokes without punchlines and punchlines without jokes. And, with dusk descending on Oxford Street's January sales, I was moved by the young LA dealer Matthew Brown's presentation of Sedrick Chisom in Pilar Corrias's basement: an acidic vision of a conflict-ridden world singed by irreversible climatic degradation.

Coinciding with *Condo*, *Auto Italia* presented "Hot Moment," a thoughtful group exhibition curated by Radclyffe Hall of three lesbian photographers—Tessa Boffin, Ingrid Pollard, and Jill Posener—each of whom began working in Thatcher-era London. The gallery's facade was obscured by a blown-up shot by Posener of a graffitied billboard in the 1980s. "We can improve your nightlife," reads an ad for *Rest Assured Beds*, the words "JOIN LESBIANS UNITED" sprayed below. *Condo*, quietly cosmopolitan, proved to be a deft rejoinder to an imminent and still encloded Brexit. But it occurred to me that this would be the one artwork seen from the upper deck of a bus, where Keiller's melancholic hymn to a city "too thinly spread, too private for anyone to know" echoes true.

— Harry Burke