

curator, is anybody going to notice the change? 'Last Day' does provide glimpses of the self-forming group show O'Neill describes, but it is hard not to see the role he has imagined as not so much about the absence of curatorial judgement but rather one in which he has exercised his judgement at an earlier stage. What is also interesting to see is that the end result of O'Neill's arch stance isn't that much different to a handful of other group shows running concurrently around London.

The gathering of 22 artists at ASC Gallery made it clear from the title of the show that they wanted to dissolve the efforts of not just the curator but also the audience. **There Is Not and Never Has Been Anything To Understand!** Posed as a Communiqué from David Burrows and Simon O'Sullivan's fictitious group *Plastique-Fantastique*, the press release is phrased in mock-disbelief at the group's baffling behaviour, claiming they were 'interested in making an exhibition through layering or accretion, a process more akin to the production of a noise or crystalline object than curation'. The result is a dense matrix of sculptures, diagrams, glitter and angular oration that feels like a surrealist conspiracy theory and occult capitalist critique. 'Do you think the volcano serenades? That the ocean is playing a rhythm just for you?' asks the incredulous alien narrator of Benedict Drew's video *Lecture on Everything*, 2012. Looking like some sort of toxic mutant cousin of Zig and Zag, the black foam puppet emits buzzes and blips that are subtitled as a condescending talking-to about humanity's attitude to noise. In the next room, the droning automated voice of Dean Kenning's *Value – A Visualisation*, 2012, describes a factory of zombie workers who secrete a 'congealed human labour' goo from their bodies. Burrows and O'Sullivan's cryptic diagrams line the walls, circles bouncing off owls, dogs, rats and crystals, making an unsifted, unsettling rant that is like the combined dream-babbling of Karl Marx, Aleister Crowley, Aldous Huxley and Doctor Who.

Among the seven artists in **Capital** at George and Jørgen there was no such chatter, being a more thought-through collection of work – to the point of being stiffly overconsidered. Assembled by artists Fergus Heron and Martin Newth, photographic and video works traced London's hierarchies of visibility. But as in Heron's shots of empty shopping malls, or Emma Charles's *After the Bell*, 2009, where we see City office cleaners doing their jobs at night from mostly a vantage point outside the buildings' glass facades, they only lightly trace the surfaces. Thorsten Kraub's cute double projection *London/London*, 2010, shows super 8 footage taken by the artist's father on a family holiday to the city in 1974, complete with panning shots of the iconic sights and those awkward, bored moments when the family is captured on film. Kraub replicates the footage shot for shot remarkably accurately, but what is more remarkable is how little things have changed. The groups of tourists are the same but the presence of CCTV cameras and the absence of the family and the artist himself highlight the capital's increasingly intimidating impersonality. What felt like the main backbone for the show was Karen Knorr's 'Gentlemen' series, 1981-83, a set of black-and-white photographs of London's illustrious private clubs, their members posing ostentatiously among extravagant studies and parlours, while quotes from Parliament and news of the day subtitle the images – several of the lines obliquely referencing the Falklands War that was happening at the time. In *You May Meet its Members*, a trim, suited man poses in front of a vaulted window, the words underneath gently gibing at what you assume is the club's description of itself, its members 'branded with the Stamp of the Breed'.

Deliquesce at Jonathan Viner, curated by Emma Astner and Laura McLean-Ferris, was more concise and well-directed – not just because it was only five artists but also simply because of the order of the works. In Emily Wardill's short black-and-white film *The Pips*, 2011, we see a sole gymnast training in a studio, twirling the long ribbon found in the Olympic Rhythmic Gymnastics discipline. The camera follows her



Rhona Byrne
It's all up in the air
2011

Karen Knorr
You May Meet its Members from the series 'Gentlemen'
1981-83



dotingly as she gracefully moves around the room, twisting her body into unlikely arrangements, the ribbon a flowing extension of her body. Then the image warps slightly, folding in on itself, and a spare foot appears and drops to the floor. The dancer continues unperturbed as a leg, a hand and another leg bob to the floor, and she finishes her routine resting poised among the discarded appendages. This startling moment is the last thing you see in the show, but returning back upstairs to the rest of the exhibition it manages to transform what felt like a gathering of heavy puns and unfinished posturing into a more tangible and lyrical affair. The posters of euro and pound coins draped over trapezes in Nina Beier's *The Demonstrators (Drowning Coins)*, 2011, inherit some of the gymnast's poise, while the dark forest photograph printed on aluminium and folded into a rough flag-like X in Oscar Tuazon's *Untitled (Photograph)*, 2012, suddenly demands that you acknowledge the body that bent it into that state. What Astner and McLean-Ferris allow for in 'Deliquesce' are spaces for contradiction, change and multiplicity, a feat much more notable in a smaller group show. But it also highlights the fact that the shifts O'Neill attempts to articulate – that group shows be multiplicitous and self-managing – are common and spring from the necessary facts of placing multiple artists and works alongside each other. Despite attempts to redefine or diffuse their identity, it seems that in the making of group exhibitions the curator remains an ambiguous, shadowy figure who must stand back but at the same time be willing sometimes to emerge and be identified. ■

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