

Gerard Hanson

As a person of Irish Caribbean heritage, recognised as black in a white community and white in a black community, I feel a complicated sense of belonging. This personal experience of a dual dilemma and its limited acceptance, presents a potential threat to others: 'Can I be trusted, and will I support their cause?' 'Keep your head down' and 'Don't speak out' ring in my ears!

British Multiculturalism advocates difference in all its forms. Trends within society show more and more relationships that span religious, social and racial boundaries. Physical boundaries however, within the community, prove a strong challenge. Minority groups are confined to deprived urban environments, where they undertake low paid work. Within these close confines, social unrest and dissolution are inevitable. To stray out of these urban communities creates a fascinating contrast. Am I welcome in the 'country village' wearing my urban uniform? Or will I be under surveillance every step of the way? You could argue that the green boundaries that separate the edge of the council estate (or 'Projects' as they are called in the US) and the rural idyll are as overt as the 'Separation Wall' in Israel.



Left - 'Blacks Irish Dogs' work in progress, Gerard Hanson ©
Right - 'Black Board', George Chang ©

Message Board

'Message Board'

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Front cover image 'Three Grace Tryout' detail, Zoë Charlton ©

The Cowley road is a long-established multi-ethnic community in Oxford UK. It is located between Oxford city centre with its old university and picturesque meadows and the Cowley car factory. The East Oxford Community Centre is at the hub of this cultural crossroads and is in the midst of a dense pedestrian area.

The exhibition series runs from 1st March 2007 to 31st August 2007. Each artists' work will be on show for one month and will be located on the exterior of the East Oxford Community centre, Cowley road.

'Another Dead Sistisa', © 1999 Joyce Scott



'Message Board'

Message Board provides a format for Billboard sized photographs of original artworks. Removed from the studio, gallery and museum by a process of photographic reproduction these sometimes intimate works become aggrandized when re-presented in a public setting.

Works by Black, Chinese and White American artists from Baltimore, USA, along with an Irish Caribbean artist from Oxford, UK, will be shown in series. The common theme of these works is, in the words of Kerry James Marshall, a 'Fusion of the Classical and the Vernacular'; these are works that are savvy, sophisticated and 'folk'. Often highly crafted, they are arguably the products of un-alienated labour, produced in regional centres by artists who think independently and whose ambivalent relationship to the mainstream contexts of art's production and distribution allows them room to 'breathe'.

To make art in Baltimore is to work in a city with a formidable Black History including Billy Holiday's ironic and hauntingly soulful songs of the 1930's and Frederick Douglas' 'Narrative of the Life of an American Slave' 1845. Douglas gives a searing description of his dehumanising experiences. The artists in this show, conscious of making art today at the margins of culture have positioned themselves with an eye to their own history. Like Zoë Charleton's 'Three Grace Tryout' all of the artists in this show have had to run some considerable cultural distance.

Curated by Stephen Lee and Gerard Hanson



'Life Lines' detail, Linda DePalma ©



'Lipstick Mountain' George Chang ©

Artists

included in the show:

Sam Christian Holmes,
Zoë Charleton,
George Chang,
Joyce Scott,
Linda DePalma,
and
Gerard Hanson.

