In a brisk sunny London afternoon I make my way in front of a seemingly abandoned house. I have been invited to a private view of POMP, a temporary exhibition born from a collaboration between Simon Poole’s Osterley and artist Timothy Holt. “It cannot be,” I tell myself looking at the decrepit construction in front of me, wondering if I have yet again fallen victim of my bad sense of direction.

“An art exhibition here?”My bewilderment, stemming from numerous visits to white cube-type galleries and museum stores, is dissipated by the figure of Mr. Poole now standing on the front steps and inviting me to start exploring the show. I am therefore led into a corridor and suddenly have the sensation of having entered the virtual reality of one of those video games in which the player roams a desolated planet earth, fallen victim to a disease outbreak of sort, trying to survive and save the few human beings left. However, I am quickly brought back to reality, or perhaps transported to another world entirely, by the sight of extraordinary art works standing out from the skeleton of the forsaken building.

This interesting interplay of venue and object is yet again evident in Patrick Colquhoun’s inhabit dwelling Adelis ter (1975). In this case elements made of coloured ceramics and held together by hardware composition in the upper loft and in the show. Two imposing sheets of brass hang in the open space linking the ground and first floors. One is held in position by a strap of Omni directional, the other appears to have been applied on one of the wooden beams belonging to the skeleton of disrapted house. I allow myself to playfully experiment with the changes in my reflection into the brass sheets as I move around them, almost matching my movements to the sound of Graham Hadley’s 100 II /F-100 II playing from the front of the house, as the sun is setting, illuminating with its lights the whole space. I cannot help but notice, despite their significant size, Woodstock’s sculptures radiate a sense of grace and serenity which, once again, suggests the ideas that they might have been here all along in a house built around them, for them.


As I enter a much smaller room towards the back or the building, I am met by Rebecca Hose. Experiments in lying and falling playing on a TV screen in a continuous loop, in the compilations of videos she explores artificial materials mostly with the context of natural settings through quasi-scientific procedures: it seems quite fitting that there would be a piece dedicated to analyzing materials, considering that the whole exhibition appears to be, among other things, an experiment with materials of every sort. Amy Stone’s sculptures, Ameneh (Córdoba), Etiopía, and Land are indeed a great example of this very concept. Made of powder coated stainless steel and other components, they resemble geometric shapes, reminding me of fantastic cities that could fill well in a science fiction (or perhaps another video game?) scenario, an affect which is nothing but amplified by their shadows cast on the walls of the first floor.

Last but not least I come into a room at which I had only glanced on my way up from the ground floor. Here I find myself in a row elongated room with a few assembled innicious black plastic bags. As I ponder on the possible meaning of the installation, a young lady “activates” the bags which start moving the room as if on wheels. The other viewers and I take just a moment to recover from the surprise and where before there was mostly silence and concentration, there is now lively chatter, as if the animation of Timothy Holt’s bags for his had affected us as well. Indeed, perhaps this is the actual art work with which I observed more people interested, to the point that even a couple of children started running after the bags, changing their trajectory, and laughing all the while.

On this note, I would like to point out one of the features that render this exhibition innovative. While in most instances I have witnessed art shows are reserved for a selected few and, in the case of contemporary art especially, are often branded by many as a poor alternative to traditional forms of social and cultural activities, this exhibition was designed by its organisers to welcome anybody and be a chance for exploration, reflection and education. In fact, I am told that Phoebe Gardiner conducted workshops for POMP that saw the participation of people of any age. This is of course not to criticise more conventional art venues, which also offer educational opportunities. What I mean is that it is a pleasure to see that a significant effort was made to render art and particularly contemporary art which is often unfortunately overlooked as being too cryptic or enigmatic for the larger crowds to appreciate it, truly attributable to all regardless of their prevailing knowledge or experience of art itself.

Having been lucky enough to see the show, I can honestly say that it was refreshing to see something new and different. After all, the art world has always progressed throughout history thanks to the visionary ideas of artists and art professionals who dared to create something new. It is my belief that this type of innovation took place in POMP. The curators, the artists and Delver (which funded the project) all came together to create a unique experience, rendered all the more amazing by the limited time window during which it was available. The choice of such an atypical and, I dare say, journalistic venue, in a context yet perfectly complementing the title of the show, is essential in differentiating this display from any other and highlighting the works presented in it. Both the individual and collective display of the art piece truly augmented the overall impact of POMP.

The idea to create a “mobile” gallery on which Holt and Poole are working is extraordinary and might revolutionise the way we conceive of experiencing art. They are redirecting the public’s attention to the white cube gallery genre, which although as a form has aesthetic and intellectual and once considered innovative has now become the standard to be followed, tovenues deemed unlikely to host such work. This might have a double effect: it is perhaps a move towards that art aficionados crowd while at the same time demonstrating, in a sense, the display of art, in other words, the new project is experimental. Scientists might observe works more closely or explore them displayed in a determined place for a certain amount of time, but at the same time able to go underground and be shown in a selected places, where I avidly ask bath and Poole “what next?” I am reassured that they might surprise us with a new project in the near future. I can honestly say, I cannot wait to see what they will amaze us with next.

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