

EJ Major : Try To Do Things We All Can Understand

29th March – 10th May 2008

Gallery tour and talk: Saturday 12th April 3pm Free.

This is the first solo show by London based artist, EJ Major. She presents four bodies of work from the past four years, all distinct yet complimentary journeys around private/public concerns. The artist trained as a photographer and social scientist, and the concerns that inform her work are rooted in questions of identity, in how we are constructed as human beings - by biology, society and circumstance – and in the lexicon of languages we must adapt to and adopt to survive.

EJ Major's materials began with the personal, letters, diary excerpts and family snap-shots, and now include their public equivalents - films, books and magazine articles. The process of re-presenting these varies depending on the chosen material but is always something that emerges over time and begins with the act of collection.

The work Try to do things we all can understand (2003-2005) is shown on two monitors and includes 300+ film stills and the corresponding excerpts of dialogue that go with them. The image/text pieces are played on alternate monitors at random, thereby undermining each narrative's specificity. Instead the piece plays upon both memory and fantasy using films the artist has grown up with. Film is again referenced in Love is... (2004-2006) in which the artist took a screenshot of each second of the film Last Tango in Paris and from each one printed a single postcard. These 7,000+ postcards were then hand delivered around London and the West Midlands with a Freepost address on the back and a message which asked the recipient to respond to the postcard as part of an enquiry into love. On a practical level the film was used as an organisational framework around which to engage strangers who could remain anonymous unless they chose not to.

Made between 2004 – 2006 Marie Claire RIP is based on an article published in Marie Claire magazine which featured police mug-shots of a woman taken over a fourteen year period. The images were used as an anti-advert for heroin and the article revealed that not long after the last picture was taken the woman was found dead. In part, this piece was motivated by a desire to memorialise an unnamed person, a woman who had already died and had no control over the use of her own image. The latest work from a distance (2007) uses William Faulkner's novel As I Lay Dying as a starting point to deal with both the failure of language and with its suggestive possibility. Major originally read and annotated this text at the age of seventeen, a time when she also often found herself unable to speak and even, at times, write. Seventeen years later she has revisited the text in an attempt to explore language. The images are culled from Brownie annuals and are representations of an idealized and sanitized take on reality.

In all, the driving concerns in the artists work remain constant: an exploration of the individual as a physical and psychological collage; a study of the ways in which we are simultaneously created and self-creating, of the way our worlds and our selves entwine.

Among her shows EJ Major has exhibited at Clampart in New York (2007), PDNB Dallas (2007), Darmstadter Tage der Fotografie (Germany, 2007), at the Zoo Art Fair with Trolley Gallery (2006) and at Fotobild Berlin (2005). She has forthcoming shows in Germany, Toronto and at The Australian Center for Photography in Sydney.

A minigraph with a commissioned essay by Catherine Somze has been produced to coincide with the exhibition.

NOTE: this exhibition is part of Glasgow International 2008, Glasgow's Festival of International Visual Art (www.glasgowinternational.org)