Citation

White, Laura. 2009. Sandarbh UK International Artist Residency Program Belper Derbyshire. N/A. [Other]

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Sandarbh Workshop 2009
Belper, Derbyshire.

No Nature in the Rural

Review by Laura White

respond

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NOT
As an artist based in London, I draw from the local area of Hackney and the bargain shops for my materials, so in Belper I found myself seeking out retail outlets unique to the specific setting such as the farmers stores, where anything from pigs ears to electric fencing is sold. Usually locating my work in spaces designated for artist’s work, such as galleries or project spaces, I wondered if my work could enter a non gallery location, to extend my ongoing interest for combining the readymade with the ‘art’ object, in challenging the viewers’ perception and understanding of the things and stuff we see, buy and accumulate. So I decided to approach the Red Cross Charity shop to see if I could use their shop window to make a work. Met with a little trepidation from the manager she eventually allowed me to use the space for a couple of days. I embedded manipulated and purchased objects in the window display along side the items currently placed. For example, there were two mannequins in the window, one dressed in a tuxedo and the other a woman’s summer suite. The suite was subjected to the attachment of clothes pegs, nipping in the waist and lifting the hem line in a playful excessive manner, while the male mannequin had accessories added - a plastic hula - hula skirt made from heavy duty green plastic bin liners, and a multicoloured plastic hair extension. Other more subtle arrangements guided the viewers’ eyes around the window, such as the disorientation and clustering of unfamiliar and familiar objects, Such as glass bowls filled with lollipops and other Red Cross items displayed on strange crafted plinths. It became a playful arrangement of object collisions, which aimed to engage the viewer in a different experience to that of the usual window display. The viewer scrutinized unrecognizable items alongside the familiar, while others just laughed, saying ‘Are those pig ears?’ There was one problem though! Rose, the manager who on returning to the premises a day later and seeing what I had done to her window; even thought she had agreed for me to be there; threw my work out in a rage, saying, ‘this was not art!’ Unfortunately she had missed the local’s interest the day before I was setting up, and clearly felt threatened by the presence of something so unfamiliar as contemporary art! This, I have to say, was the only project that was so refutably rejected during the workshop by an individual in Belper, and in some ways highlighted the importance for workshops like these to happen for better or for worse. I can’t help thinking that perhaps the next time Rose from... 

things
stuff
the Red Cross sees some contemporary art, she might ask why it makes her so angry—or maybe not?

It seems to me that these kinds of residencies/workshops are amazing and successful at the very same time as being disappointing and fail. What I mean by this is that the artists are engaged with each other, their work and the location, with levels of both success and failure, and the outcomes of individual projects are met with both support and disregard within the community. Probably a very good indication that this workshop is critically engaged, and in my opinion the only way a workshop like this can operate.

Artist projects included, Francis Gomila's video exploring a disused building, home for pigeons both dead and alive, Chintan Upadhyay abandoned car, which he set fire to and then planned to plant a garden within the burnt out shell, Dong-hun Sung's portable house costume which he took on walks around Belper and Anke Mellin's wishing box.

For more information on other artist projects go to the website www.sandarbhart.com/

Participating artists included:

Images:
Laura White - Red Cross Collision. Mixed media.
Chintan Upadhyay - A memorial - In memory of a dead car