

# PALE CARNAGE

## Exhibition Events

### Curator Tour

Martin Clark

Thursday 30 August, 7pm

Free, just turn up

Join Martin Clark, Curator of *Pale Carnage* for a tour of the exhibition.

### Film programme

See website and cinema guide

The exhibition is accompanied by a publication which includes a text by writer Michael Bracewell and a picture essay edited by Martin Clark. The catalogue is available from DCA shop priced £8.95.

Exhibition originated by Arnolfini

## Dundee Contemporary Arts

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Nobuyoshi Araki  
Athanasios Argianas  
Ulla von Brandenburg  
Tom Burr  
Gillian Carnegie  
Steven Claydon  
Cerith Wyn Evans  
Lothar Hempel  
Mark Leckey  
Aïda Ruilova  
Dirk Stewen  
JD Williams

This challenging and highly original exhibition addresses ideas of cruelty, desire, beauty, decadence, voyeurism and violence. The selection of the works in *Pale Carnage* evolved from the curator's interest in the practice of the twelve artists, and the common layers of associations and references in the work. The exhibition explores the relationships between the works, both thematically, and physically within the gallery space.

The main concept that links all of the works is the influence of Modernism, and the exhibition examines in particular the relationship between Classicism and Modernism, and their unsettling associations with fascism. The title, *Pale Carnage*, has been taken from the poem 'April' written by Ezra Pound in 1915. Pound – a profoundly modern poet (as well as a musician, composer, critic and economist) is considered a key figure of Modernism, a movement born out of the transitional and restless time around the turn of the twentieth century. References to Greek and Roman classicism, as well as ancient Chinese and Japanese literature resonate throughout Pound's work. His political views were deeply problematic – during the Second World War he was a supporter of Mussolini, and broadcast fascist propaganda from Rome. Although the exhibition is not about Pound, his life and work can be seen as a structural reference point for the works in *Pale Carnage*, illustrating the shift from Modernist ideals of beauty and utopia, to the darker underbelly of extremism and fascism, and their inherent concepts of repression, power, elitism, purity, control and restraint.

6 July –  
2 September 2007

In the centre of the large gallery is **Lothar Hempel**'s *In the dead of night, when everything sleeps!* (2004). The work is carnivalesque; almost like a stage set with the formalist arrangement of the plinths, on top of which are placed puppet-like figures with musical instruments. The photographs attached to the plinths are of classical statues found near the Parthenon in Greece; one of which has an image of a dancer superimposed. This combination of classical and Modernist, and the ambiguous narrative of the work, evokes the structure of a dream, or an alternate reality.

**Ulla von Brandenburg**'s works suggest the theatrical, the occult and the uncanny. Her large black and white wall painting on the back wall of the gallery, *Szene II* (2007), is based on an image taken from a stage production of a play by the Belgian Symbolist playwright Maurice Maeterlinck (1862 – 1949). Much of Maeterlinck's work was created around the turn of the century – the fin de siècle. Her smaller projected work, *Reiter* (2004), depicts a tableaux vivant (living picture), a popular form of entertainment in past times where costumed actors would pose silently and unmoving as if in a painting or photograph.

**Gillian Carnegie** works within traditional genres of oil painting. Although her work displays a highly accomplished technique, Carnegie's paintings question the established perceptions and language of the medium. At first glance, *Yellow Wall* (2006) appears to be a simple abstract monochrome, but on closer inspection reveals a landscape within the thickly applied paint. The

adjacent painting, *Kalvin* (2004), rendered in a very different style, compels the viewer to consider the relationship between the two paintings, and to shift their gaze from one to the other. The ambiguity of these works emphasise the feeling of transition and shifts in time and place.

Like Steven Claydon, **Dirk Stewen**'s work uses carefully chosen and manipulated materials. He subverts the formal processes of photography as a starting point for his drawings and collages. In some of the works, Stewen paints onto photographic paper with ink, which reacts to the paper creating fluid and organic patterns; in others he combines collage with photographs. These drawings and collages are then embroidered with coloured thread, or bits of confetti, and juxtaposed with faded pages from old books.

The focus of **Steven Claydon**'s work gravitates towards overlooked moments in history, particularly in the interaction between art and politics in early twentieth century Europe. His work includes references to Vorticism and the Bauhaus, as well as to monuments and memorials from the turn of the last century. The latter can be seen in *Grazing Deflation* (2007) which suggests itself as the bust of a famous historical figure, but which is actually comprised of features from different people and materials from different sources.

**Athanasios Argianas**'s work draws on Modernist literature, poetry and avant-garde musical structures and innovations. His sculptures *Lyrical Machine* (2006) and *Song Machine #6* (2006) are based on his own musical compositions, visually

translated into simple constructions influenced by 1930's decorative arts. In his *Braid Series 2* (2006), Argianas has painstakingly painted the intricate patterns of the braided hair of a group of anonymous women. The underlying precision and control in these works creates a tension that subverts the beauty and decorativeness of the subject matter.

**Aïda Ruilova**'s short films are influenced by European horror films and pop, punk and classical music. Her experimental cross-cutting technique references avant-garde editing styles, adding to the unsettling, uncanny feel of her work. Ruilova's short film *Beat and Perv* (1999), shown on an endless loop, strikes an uneasy balance between precision and chaos; control and madness.

In his 2004 work *A Short History of the Shadow by Victor I. Stoichita* (1997), **Cerith Wyn Evans** explores the concept of light and dark, as a material, an experience and as subject matter. The monitor on the wall displays text taken from the aforementioned book, a cultural history of the shadow in art and cinema. This text has been translated by Wyn Evans into Morse Code using a computer programme, which then translates the code into flashes of light emitted by the Modernist style lamp. The text is available to read in the small reading room at the back of the gallery.

**JD Williams**' *Untitled* (2003-04) drawings experiment with one motif used in many different combinations. He uses black boot polish rubbed into thin, hole-punched paper which bears the evidence of the process. The motif is

taken from a shape the artist found in the corner of a drawing by the French playwright and poet Antonin Artaud (1896 – 1948). Viewed together, the drawings are suggestive of early experimental film stills, or large photographic negatives.

**Tom Burr**'s sculptures and installations subvert the aesthetics of Minimalism, superimposing a sense of theatre, spectacle, sexuality and decadence over his controlled, restrained, minimalist structures. The work *This Drinking Alone (The Deep Intoxication Series)* (2006) is suggestive of the debris remaining after an unknown, debauched episode; or perhaps the need to escape the banality of everyday life.

#### THIS WORK CONTAINS SEXUAL IMAGERY

Ideas of control, repression, power and the aggressive nature of the voyeuristic gaze are explored in two photographs by **Nobuyoshi Araki**. These elaborately staged, theatrical images show women tied up and restrained using the Japanese art of erotic rope-tying known as Kinbaku (to bind tightly), or Nawa Shibari (to tie rope). Many Modernist writers, poets and artists were fascinated and influenced by Eastern culture, and its 'otherness' in relation to Western perceptions.

Finally, **Mark Leckey**'s film *Parade* (2003) plays with ideas of the Dandy or Flaneur; glamour, fashion and decadence. A shadowy figure moves through a dark, dreamlike world of collaged streetscapes and glossy surfaces, ending up in the midst of opulent, decadent, grandeur. However this glamour is corrupted - the protagonist is detached and isolated from his surroundings, which are now dark and menacing.