

Permindar Kaur – Hiding Out

Tom Hackett

I first met the work of Permindar Kaur in the late 1980's during an open studio visit. I was struck by the convincing maturity and the production values of her sculpture then. I have since met it on a number of occasions over the years and have never failed to find it a rewarding encounter. This show at the Djanogly is no exception. Working with domestic fabrics from curtain material to fun shaggy fake furs, the bulk of the works present wall based rectangular 'canvas' sized pieces. Camouflaged amongst their surfaces, are curious creatures, redolent of those featured in iconic children's book 'Where the wild things are'. They are devoid of eyes but have with spikey claws and a plethora of horns fashioned in copper sheet. They hang limply in a curious amalgam of hostility and impotence. They are evocative of soft toys and are beautifully crafted items, finished to an immaculate state of production, which hides the evident authorship of the maker. This paradox on friendly/hostile trajectory could easily slip into the merely likeable worlds of 'Monsters Inc' or Jelly Cat retro toy, and this is, in part a central plank of their charm. This is all well and good, but to be good art we need something more. Kaur delivers this with a sophistication and complexity of references well beyond this initial anthropomorphic entry point and this takes them to an altogether more substantial place. This show and this work I suggest, is a master class in the difference between playing and playfulness. The former is about an openness to discovery. The latter is about a complex and considered subversion of the familiar into a new territory utilizing code shift to activate something new for the viewer. Her forms take us to childhood with all of its fears, comforts and insecurities. Kaur's show is both familiar and strange. It warmly invites you in, but leaves things open to reflection resisting simple closure, it is figurative, but not narrative and this is what keeps your eye and mind engaged, and is what keeps you looking and looking.

There are key signifiers of cultural identity within the work, but these for me are not the core project per se. Arguably the cultural background of all artists inevitably filters into what they produce. We are produced into the world and that shapes us and our position and thus what we put back out. Kaur's work, like anything valid extends beyond the personal into the collective. We can connect with it without having to be inside her head. Other works include human forms normally reserved for the gents toilet door sign repeated at various scale and colour in both soft and sheet metal form. These are lost dislocated and devoid of individual signification, they suggest a sense of being baffled and confused in the bigger grown up world. It is a testament to any art that can appeal on any number of levels to both my 5 year old daughter and myself, a reluctant grown up. It is an uplifting and thought provoking show and is well worth

a gander.

Showing alongside Kaur in the Angear Visitors Centre, Jackie Berridge continues the anthropomorphic imperative in her intriguing white paintings, which feature a delightful array of expressively depicted hybrid forms and creatures jockeying for position in a fragmented pictorial structure. The loose sketching painting provides a great counterpoint to the precision engineering of Kaur and the two shows sit well together.

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Djanogly Art Gallery Lakeside Art Centre University Park Nottingham