

recollections of Cripps's performances with the thoughts of younger artists. At times it was unclear whose voices were being heard and whether their words were factual or imagined. More compelling was the work of American poet and sound artist Z'EV, a celebration of the work of both Cripps and Jean Tinguely whose practice the former greatly admired, and writer Langeley's essay 'Garden States', a contemplative reading in which the mechanical garden was explored via the history of garden design and idealised visions of wilderness pictorialised and nature tamed.

Among Cripps's many idiosyncratic initiatives was the DSB, the Distinctive Sound Bureau, an organisation whose officials walked the city streets wearing armbands in search of sites of remarkable sounds, a point of departure perhaps for Oldfield Ford's psychogeographic sound work created during drifts around Bermondsey, and Warwick's collage of urban recordings sourced from Berlin's Görizler park and various construction sites. Cripps conceived of his works in terms of 'slow events' (exhibitions) and 'fast events' (live performances). Importantly, the mechanical garden at Dilston Grove combined both with an evening of live music and performance featuring Bean and Wilson, Ashkelon, Bruce Gilbert and Anne Imhof, activating the otherwise slow work.

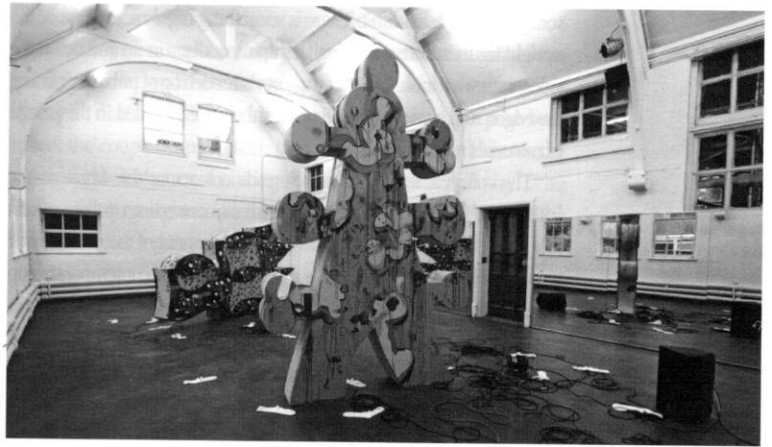
Admirable in its experimental and genuinely collaborative mode of production, 'The Mechanical Garden and Other Long Encores' offered a thoughtful alternative to recent strategies of performing the archive while underscoring Cripps as an important figure in the history of performance, whose work existing narratives have yet fully to examine. In contrast to many artists working with performance in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Cripps was concerned less with framing his work than with deliberately disturbing and undermining existing art's conventions. Unapologetically ephemeral, his work represented a backlash in an art world increasingly dominated by the market and the need to produce saleable objects. At a juncture when contemporary art feels more myopically market-driven than ever before, Woodmill's courageous and considered response to Cripps's intensely experimental work is both timely and hopeful. 'Most gardens feed off the soil,' writes Langeley, 'but the mechanical garden finds its nourishment from the past.' Using the spectra of the Cripps archive as a catalyst, Woodmill successfully co-created a constellation of work as wild, ambitious and alchemical as the history it reimagined. ■

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Edwin Burdis: UIB

Primary Nottingham 1 October to 1 November

'Multiple points in this crude landscape' is the evocative title of a series of production residencies and commissions orchestrated by artist/curators Niki Russell and Rebecca Beinart for Nottingham studio and gallery complex Primary. As in the work of previous and forthcoming residents Jonathan Baldock and Shana Moulton, a strong strain of



Edwin Burdis
UIB 2014

eccentricity and playful imagination runs through the work of Edwin Burdis, the second artist to undertake this commission. Burdis has been actively ploughing his own furrow for over a decade now, creating works across painting, sculpture, performance, sound and video.

Working in residence for a month in the former primary school's gymnasium, he is presenting what he calls an 'opera'. These operas are multi-part, multi-sensory installation-performances in which a cast of works-cum-characters play out suggested narrative vignettes. The term suggests grandiosity, drama and seriousness. We expect passion, life and death, which are present here – though shot through with dark, wicked humour.

In 'UIB' Burdis fully embraces the titular 'multiple points' as well as the 'crudeness' of the aforementioned landscape he has been tasked to explore. Two large, paint-spattered sculptures dominate the space: possible characters in a story that unfolds through sound and a provided text – the opera's libretto. Alongside this, three music videos, reusing the sound created for the installation, are to be released online during the exhibition.

Fictional narratives and imagination drive the project. The action takes place on the 'United Islands of Brittle-leen' – an imagined future Britain that is largely submerged in water. The sculptures appear like cartoonish characters, anthropomorphic though oversized, and one seems to have fallen over, or is it reclining? Burdis is reluctant to reveal names or titles and we are left to guess whether they may or may not be the 'Blue Jean Girl' and her 'Boy Toy Bitch', the chief protagonists in this tale of adventure, love, lust and desire.

Describing them as sculptures might be misleading; equally they act as freestanding surfaces for the artist to paint and draw on. Collaged images pepper the exteriors of the figures, layered over and under with glitter, ink and paint. One side features cars, diamond rings, designer perfume, make-up and high fashion culled from the pages of glossy magazines, another features masked faces, skulls, heads or tubes of paint and a seemingly incongruous brick. His style is by turns bold and almost graffiti-like or painterly and gestural. Blood-like dribbles secrete and ooze, spray-painted lines and doodled motifs are overlaid, with varnish and enamel worked in over all this. The figures seem to stand dumb and awkward as though maybe caught in the act of doing



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something they shouldn't. There is something highly scrotal about the upright figure's forms. Bulging flesh-pink nodes run up and down the sides, with what looks like a teenage boy's rendering of pubic hair lining the edges, and somewhat testicular conkers are included in the palette of materials on one face.

The collaged, layered feeling spreads out across the whole of the installation. All around, cables sprawl and coil, connecting up the speakers and subwoofer that will deliver the aural component of the piece – itself a sound collage incorporating the sonic vocabulary of contemporary pop music alongside layers of Burdis's atonal, jumping song that delivers the narrative. A deep and sustained blast of gut-shaking bass has an inescapable physical effect, while samples of Beyonce's soulfully delivered honey-soaked R&B vocals add steam to the story. Her sustained 'bo-o-o-oy' is reused on several occasions to humorous effect.

Placed on and around the cables and sculptures, gym socks simultaneously suggest healthy lifestyles and pubescent male masturbatory practices. These are the two poles of desire that Burdis seems to oscillate between in his work: the aspirational and the base, banal bodily functions and almost unattainable luxury. The weird and disconcerting future setting that he conjures for these contemporary consumer anxieties and personal dramas adds liveliness and humour to what might otherwise seem like banal source material.

The work is supremely imaginative and playful. Blending dark, dirty and subversive humour with a material exuberance lends the work an affective dimension and a libidinal energy that makes it exciting and compelling to follow. However, the project doesn't feel completely resolved in this instance. This strikes me as a consequence of the nature of the commission – quick turnaround and an open-ended invitation focused on production rather than exhibition. If the gaps and lack of finish are frustrating, that is only because I am left wanting more. I will be looking forward to seeing what comes next from both the artist and the space. ■

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The Influence of Furniture on Love

Wysing Arts Centre Cambridge 14 September
to 2 November

'The Influence of Furniture on Love', along with the exhibition 'Hey, I'm Mr Poetic', staged at Wysing Arts Centre between April and June this year, are both pauses to reflect on the institution's 35-year history. Although Wysing has an exhibitions and events programme coordinated by in-house curators, and on-site studios and specialist workshops, over the decades a remarkable tally of artists – a veritable who's who – have passed through the retreats and residencies programmes. Wysing's institutional remit of process and production lends it a refreshing autonomy that distinguishes it from other exhibition-oriented venues across the UK. That it is loved and appreciated by artists both regionally and nationally is unsurprising.

Together, these exhibitions represent a selective survey of those who have stayed at the rural Cambridgeshire site over the years. 'Hey, I'm Mr Poetic' was presented in the public gallery, while 'The Influence of Furniture on Love' was staged in Wysing residency artists' lodgings, a 17th-century farmhouse – the first time it has opened to the public. Making the private public, and how to live and work together, are among themes addressed by 'The Influence of Furniture on Love', a title taken by Wysing curator Lotte Juul Peterson and artist-curator Giles Round

from an unpublished essay by the economist John Maynard Keynes. In this essay, held by the University of Cambridge, Keynes discusses whether it is possible for the rooms in which we live to 'suggest to us thoughts and feelings and occupations'.

The farmhouse is an intelligent setting for this exhibition, returning the domestic living place, a scene of sociality – albeit temporary – with the manifest place of work: the gallery. It implies a sinuous network of relations beyond Wysing itself, and that somehow the exhibition's absences, its partiality, linger on. (Concealed at the end of the farmhouse, a house within a house, is the caretaker's residence.)

Included among the 19 exhibiting artists in 'The Influence of Furniture on Love' are co-curator Round, Céline Condorelli, Gil Leung, Philomene Pirecki, Phil Root, Mark Aerial Waller and Neal White, along with two Turner Prize winners: Laure Prouvost and Elizabeth Price. While there is no pretence to representativeness, the selection is weighted towards already-visible, mainly London-based artists, leading me to speculate about those who are absent.

So this speculation on the affective influence of rooms, inhabitants and their objects is a prescient imponderable for viewers of this exhibition. It is also prescient, although I doubt they would couch it in such language, for the Cambridgeshire ghost hunters who, since the exhibition opened to the public, have harried Wysing to spend the night in the farmhouse which, rumour has it, is haunted. Timbers used to build the house's frame are reputedly from ships salvaged following the sinking of the Spanish Armada.

To enter a house is to start on an enforced choreography. At the kitchen entrance, works by four artists – Round, Prouvost, Condorelli and The Grantchester Pottery – frame the continued movement through wonky corridors, modern bathrooms, an 18th-century porch and five bedrooms, offset by black beams and white wattle-and-daub panels. Upon entry, placed proudly on the kitchen table are Grantchester Pottery glazed stoneware objects – cloying, too-tasteful coffee pots, not for handling. But surrounding them are counterpoint works that add complexity to the somewhat fatigued art-craft-design conversation. On a shelf above the stove a small dipped porcelain bowl by Condorelli accompanies a copy of, and a reproduced page from, James Langdon's



'The Influence of Furniture on Love' installation view