

# REVIEWS

Critical commentary and contextualisation of contemporary art exhibitions and events across the UK and beyond. Commissioned by Reviews editor Hugh Dichmont.



## Meet Pamela

Project Space Leeds, Leeds  
20 November – 27 February

Each time I visit PSL it appears to be another space entirely, its generous proportions sectioned off to adapt to its current exhibition. Recently, upon entering, one can choose between two spaces: to the right, 'Signs of Life,' a joint show of work by Jim Brogden and Matthew Shelton exploring the hidden life of the city; and to the left, 'Meet Pamela,' displaying the work of four artists that highlights and investigates the processes of art making. Each direction offers the visitor a distinct experience, though presently I will focus on the latter. Tellingly, its title refers to the 1973 film *La Nuit Américaine* by François Truffaut about the making of a film called *Meet Pamela*: Reflexivity, form and process thus form the basis for the selection of work.

Passing through a dark set of dividing curtains, *The Producer* by Amy Stephens immediately arrests the eye. The crisp, angular lines of a star-shaped frame are hung from a set of gleaming bronze antlers, giving striking visual impression. The antlers are referenced in the adjacent room in *Nervous Energy*, which sports the original of the bronze cast (with clay still adhered), and a similar use of black flock fabric to clad the thin wooden outlines of geometric shapes. I must admit I was strongly taken in by these works and their subtle reference to process, but also by their confident aesthetic.

Back within the darker spaces of the exhibition, Bronwen Buckenridge's *To the Memory of MA Vorontsova* emits a softly imposing audio sequence, with appropriated laboratory imagery mapped onto a halting, yet dramatic, narrative. A visual sequence of images from lab experiments and documentaries are projected onto a set of audio speakers, from which flow a series of hauntingly poetic sound fragments originating from a 1956 audio recording of Soviet scientist Maria Vorontsova. Mesmerising in its layered

sensory impression, this collaboration with choreographer Janet Smith is well worth its five minutes and thirty-one seconds.

A second video piece, Laura Buckley's *Bajfon*, is so heavily immersed in the mechanics of its own process that the viewer's perspective is at times completely obscured. If this is a measure of the impact of Buckley's work, it must be said the projection and the related photograph, *Four Prism Aspect*, succeeded in frustrating my attempts at apprehension. That is, the moving or still images of the four Perspex triangular prisms that form the basis for the works operate well as a formal reference to the medium, but give little insight into the underlying message.

On a grander scale, Laura Morrison's imposing *Mirage Homage to Morris Louis* stands over three metres from the floor and displays a rainbow of draped latex strips which form a double-sided wall of flat colour. This sculptural 'carnis' is a nod to a painting by Morris Louis from 1960, a work that he had hoped would distinguish his flattened application of non-representational colour from the expressionist brushstroke that has since come to characterise the movement of Abstract Expressionism. An endearing counterpoint to this imposing formalist statement is Morrison's unassuming but poignant *Leap*, a photograph set within a white Gothic arched frame. I suppose I was drawn to this piece for its fragility: an image of the artist on the studio floor with what look to be wings played out in an expression of defeat, post-leap. The figure of Icarus comes to mind, as it often does in relation to inspiration and faith – both subjects that Morrison explores in her work. Like the rest of the work in 'Meet Pamela', *Leap* bares its bones and shows us the gestures and movements of ideas that make up the works presented.

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1 Left: Laura Buckley, *Bajfon*, 2 mins 33 secs, vertical screen 200x100x30cm, boxes 150x50x40cm, video projection, steel, two-way projection screen, 2009. Photo: Simon Wamer