

Fowler, Martin (2016) Still future II. [Show/Exhibition] In: Still future II, 23 January - 30 April 2016, The Dick Institute, Kilmarnock, Scotland.

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Still Future II



Still Future II, which was displayed at the Dick Institute January to April 2016, was the second exhibition and forum for a group of artists who were brought together by chance in Edinburgh. Fuelled by the need to discuss the contemporary world through their art, they formed a group in order to create exhibitions that fostered debate and dialogue across a variety of disciplines. The artwork displayed an engagement with our times and compulsion to converse in an artistic forum.

In a year when the Turner Prize was displayed in Glasgow and the British ART Show 8 comes to Edinburgh, Still Future II offers an opportunity to see a broader view of contemporary art from a group of artists originating in Scotland.

The exhibition featured works by artists John Ayscough, Martin Fowler, David Fryer, Chad McCail, Billy McCall, Robert Montgomery and Andrew Smith.

Many of the works which were on display were created specifically for the exhibition. A work by Billy McCall which has the working title "...at the end of the bridge in Kilmarnock, Scotland. (After John Ryan)" was made up of 17 paintings that partially made an image of a tower block (taken from Mary, Mungo and Midge TV series) and each painting had a title taken from a YouTube video advertising properties for sale in Kilmarnock, Va USA.

In addition to his light pieces, Robert Montgomery secured a billboard in the town to display his work "The Deciduous Knowledge of the Water". The billboard remained in place for one month and was photographed and the image appeared in the gallery as part of the exhibition.

Still Future in the artists' own words:-

The Still Future Group are a collection of visual artists that are strung together because of a variety of things but the defining factor is place. That place is Edinburgh.

Still Future Group could not care less, Edinburgh just happened to be the place, but what's more important is that there is a meaningful relationship between people who have a desire to create something beautiful, something challenging, something that is vital to society and culture in Britain and the world today.

These artists are from a time and a place that is theirs and it's time and a place that is marked by ideas of past, present and future. Growing up across the sixties and seventies in Britain was a time of shifting notions that can loosely be described as post-war modernism. These formative years were a time when the linear model of progress seemed to be a given. There was the idea that culture moved headlong into the future in a thrusting motion, discarding its predecessors as the next wave came along. Innovation as a standard and the

shock of the new was always just around the next bend. Tomorrow was a delicious mystery filled with wonder and speculation, dangerous maybe but each new generation forged new ideas, new values.

However some time during the eighties this trajectory began to falter and the confidence in the notion that things were upward and onward became shaky. Maybe the idea was an ideological figment in the first place. Today a few decades later this has become a quaint subject for numerous TV programmes as the belief of progress has shifted and been undermined by global warming and other man-made ecological disasters, by the re-emergence of religious fundamentalisms, by global financial meltdowns, and by national and racial divisions that are causing frictions the world over. The future has never looked so bleak when not so long ago it was secure.

Since the rise of globalisation and the internet with its networks and connectivity, culture has experienced a slow-down, a flatness, a plateau where everything seems accessible and nothing seems precious or valued. Once cultures took time to grow and develop then when ready burst through into full bloom. As a youth buying vinyl records was a glorious indulgence in something that took time and energy to get. It was worth it, it was valued for a long time. Making a trip to the centre of your city to see an exhibition, buying the postcard or even the catalogue was almost a religious experience, a secular pilgrimage. Somehow clicking on a mouse and seeing it on a screen during a lunch break is a bit throwaway or downloading a whole catalogue of mp3s and then not finding the time to listen to them or pour over the album cover just does not contain the same rush into the unknown. The danger is gone.

It's not how do we regain this notion of the future but how do we tackle these problems and make it vital again? Maybe there are differing ways to see things around us. Some of these are critical, some are hopeful and romantic, some take leaps into the dark and polemical, some are a drag on the rapaciousness of neoliberal capitalism, and some are just downright failures. Some are not. The Still Future Group are a bunch of disparate artists who have been informed by a place and have connections with each other that overlap and intersect. Who knows exactly what they were, what they are now and what they will be in the coming years but whatever they are, they are trying to do things.

Still Future Group 2015.

This exhibition which was funded by Creative Scotland was on display at the Dick Institute from Saturday 23 January and Saturday 30 April.

Image credit - "People You Love" Installation at De La Warr Pavillion "Random Friday" Work by Robert Montgomery, curated by Andi Mindel.