

uses of a gorilla, the animal can be seen as a stand-in for the artist. In **PIETA**, a photograph in **GALLERY 4**, he appears, held Jesus-like in the arms of an empty gorilla suit, also seen on the floor. Perhaps it was Fairhurst himself who occupied this cheap and ill-fitting suit and for **PIETA**, he has now emerged; a reluctant performer. This is the only time in the exhibition that we see a whole person, and it is poignant that it is Fairhurst who is depicted and that, by using a cable attached the camera, it is the artist who takes the photograph.

Continuing the interest in layers and sequences, Angus Fairhurst's animations, **THINGS THAT DIDN'T WORK PROPERLY/ THINGS THAT NEVER STOP (4 SCREENS)** loop moving images of contorted bodies, each one caught in its own cycle. The flickering sign above the door on the way out of these galleries, **STAND STILL AND ROT**, also warns of the difficulties and dangers of stopping.

In **GALLERY 5** on the second floor, are examples of Angus Fairhurst's cartoons. Some of these depict scenes and objects that relate to other works in the exhibition: a gorilla examines and immerses himself in a pond, and many

other gorillas, gentle and vulnerable, explore the world in different ways. A table appears to grow and come to life like the tree/man in **LESSONS IN DARKNESS**. There is also a series of contorted limb bodies and cartoons, resembling the animations: further examples of Fairhurst's dark humour. In the centre is **THE PROBLEM WITH BANANA SKINS DIVIDED/INVERTED**, another jokey reference for this fruit and a counterpart to the skinless, oversized banana at the beginning of the exhibition downstairs.

In these drawings, and throughout the exhibition, animals, objects and cut-outs stand in for the people who are hardly seen at all. However, in all Fairhurst's work there is a powerful human presence through actions, intervention, emotion and humour.

This guide is intended as an introduction to the exhibition. Please ask a steward if you have any questions. A Reading Room with further information is on the Second Floor and is open Fri - Sun 12 - 6pm.

## Introduction to the exhibition

**Angus Fairhurst**

**31 January – 29 March 2009**

This exhibition brings together artwork by Angus Fairhurst made during the last 15 years. Using a wide range of media and ways of working, from painting, drawing and screenprinting to bronze sculpture, sound and animation, the artwork shown here demonstrates the tremendous scope of Fairhurst's practice as well as its recurring themes and ideas. The artworks in Arnolfini's **FOYER** act as an introduction to many of Fairhurst's concerns: the changing of images and their meanings through layering, cutting and removal and the use of humour and familiar imagery to unsettle and surprise.

The **UNDERDONE/OVERDONE WALLPAPER** changes Arnolfini's often-white and empty entrance area into a dramatic space. The design is based on screenprints of photographs of Epping Forest where Fairhurst loved to walk.

The multiple layers of primary colours create an explosion of psychedelic colour.

In the midst of this flaring colour is the oversized banana-form of **UNDONE**. Like the wallpaper, it plays with scale so that, unpeeled and enlarged, the banana becomes a joke. In blackened bronze, a material that appears throughout this exhibition, its presence is dark and mysterious as well as comic. "I wanted to make a classical sculpture which has the lightness of a cartoon", Fairhurst remarked of this work. "A solid object cannot look like it might just disappear if you stopped thinking about it but a cartoon seems light enough that it might just do that."

For the artworks in **GALLERY 1**, Fairhurst has again used large scale to great effect. **BILLBOARD: EVERYTHING**

**BUT THE OUTLINE BLACKED-IN**, uses the notorious advertisement for Gucci's *Opium* perfume featuring Sophie Dahl. The advertisement had run in magazines without any complaints, but once out on the street, scaled-up and seen by everyone, it caused many to complain. Like all advertising images, Sophie Dahl's image was airbrushed and manipulated before publication. In this work, Fairhurst continues the obliteration, so that almost all is covered up and yet much of the power and symbolism of the image is retained. Several other artworks in this gallery use advertising posters, although in these cases, the removal and revealing is achieved through cutting, slicing and careful layering.

**THE GREAT ECSTASY** and **POSTERS/SCREEN BODY AND TEXT REMOVED** are also made by removing images. Examining these works means looking through, as well as at, the surface and in **POSTERS/SCREEN** there are also glimpses of other artworks and people reflected in the mirror, like a peep show or fairground amusement.

**THE GREAT ECSTASY** is a recreation of a To Let sign. Like the advertising images used by Fairhurst, this almost eradicated sign is still instantly recognisable, as a symbol of commerce or as one of vacancy and abandon.

The reflective surfaces and cut-out pond shapes in **UNTOUCHED** and **UNSEEN** resemble aspects of **POSTERS/SCREEN**. They reflect the gallery surroundings and the magical and mythical associations

of gazing into ponds, mean that the pond's surface can also be thought of as a gateway to another world.

On the next floor in **GALLERY 2** are some of Angus Fairhurst's most recent works. **LESSONS IN DARKNESS** depicts a mythical part-tree, part-man and it is unclear if this is a growing form, coming into life, or one disintegrating and dissolving before our eyes. It has been roughly produced, almost as though the artist had only half-formed it before casting it, capturing a moment in its changing shape and transforming this moment into bronze.

Most of the nearby paintings show imaginary, architectural spaces. Some of these works, such as **SCHOPFUN**, combine collage and paint, or painted versions of cut-out images such as in **EPHA**. All use a range of forms, both controlled and chaotic. The scale of these places is uncertain; they could be outdoor plazas or domestic interiors. Boxes and building-like shapes appear to float above the ground and in **EENP**, Fairhurst has painted a tree. This time it is not the mythical, evolving tree or a dense psychedelic forest seen in other works, but a young silver birch.

Another bronze sculpture, **UNTITLED (WITH BIRD)** is one of many works by Fairhurst that depict gorillas. The creature resembles a character from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, but its mythical references are unlike the tree and man shown in **LESSONS IN DARKNESS**; this is a solid, unambiguous being, slightly comical but fully-formed.

In the **BODY AND TEXT REMOVED** series, **FACES** and **ALL EVIDENCE OF MAN REMOVED**, Fairhurst uses the cut-out and layering methods seen in the billboards in Gallery 1. These are more intimate works and close inspection reveals edges and surface undulations caused by layers underneath. In the case of two magazines that have nearly all their content removed, Fairhurst explores similar ideas to create objects and the resulting tangled forms resemble **LESSONS IN DARKNESS**.

Angus Fairhurst's fascination with layering and the related control and chaos, can also be seen and heard in **GALLERY CONNECTIONS**. To make this work, Fairhurst dialled two galleries, put the telephone handsets together and recorded the bizarre, confused and slightly annoyed conversations that ensued. Fairhurst uses these situations and the recorded sounds and conversations in a similar way to the layering of posters and forest images in other works; the original is difficult to make out, but the apparently chaotic results reveal a new story.

In the artworks in **GALLERIES 3** and **4** next door, Angus Fairhurst further explores his twin concerns of systematic, serious production and comic incident and imagery. The **UNDERDONE/OVERDONE** paintings and **LOW, LOWER**, and **LOWEST EXPECTATIONS** series both use layering of clear, strong colours of paint. The computer-generated images in **LOW, LOWER**, and **LOWEST EXPECTATIONS** resemble music scores or mathematical diagrams. They were

made by sign writers, carrying out Fairhurst's instructions. **UNDERDONE/OVERDONE** are apparently freer and appear more natural as they depict Fairhurst's much-loved trees and forest, but here also the images are made by a clear, systematic layering of bold, primary colour and in some cases the scene is almost totally obliterated. One of these pictures is the basis for the wallpaper in the Foyer. Nearby, a **DRUM KIT** is set up for anyone who wishes to play. Echoing a previous installation of these works, it can be seen as a way to break the otherwise formal, rigid atmosphere created by other nearby works.

In **ONE YEAR OF THE NEWS (1ST JANUARY - 31ST DECEMBER 2003)** Fairhurst has collected all the daily newspapers for a year. Each issue's front cover is obliterated, but unlike the blacking out of Sophie Dahl or the removal of numerous people and words from adverts and magazines in other works, this information has been erased by being colour photocopied over and over again. A few words and dates can be picked out, but as in **UNDERDONE/OVERDONE**, the original can no longer be seen and a new type of image emerges from the cacophony. A participatory version of this work, **THE NEXT PERSON SHOULD COPY THIS**, is in the **READING ROOM** on the Second Floor (Open Fri - Sun 12 - 6pm).

Another gorilla is depicted in **A COUPLE OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THINKING AND FEELING II**, this time contemplating his missing arm. In each of Fairhurst's