

EVENTS

A Night in with George Shaw

Wed 1 Jun, 7pm, £5/£3 conc

This evening of comedy and documentary television from the past has been selected by George Shaw to give an insight into some of the concerns informing his work.

The Sunday Spot

Every Sun, 2–4pm, Free

Explore the misuse and appropriation of objects inspired by the current exhibitions at these playful workshops for families.

Family Day

Tue 31 May, 2–4pm, Free

Join us for hands-on workshops for families led by artists Lauren Willis and Heather Jones and inspired by the current exhibitions.

All welcome, ideal for children aged 3–12 years.

George Shaw in conversation

Wed 22 Jun, 7pm, £5/£3 conc

George Shaw discusses his practice and his exhibition at the SLG with writer and critic Gilda Williams.

SOUTH LONDON GALLERY EXHIBITIONS GUIDE

**GEORGE SHAW:
THE SLY AND UNSEEN DAY
25 MAY – 3 JULY 2011**

**SIMON & TOM BLOOR:
HAPPY HABITAT REVISITED
7 MAY – 19 JUNE 2011**

SLG

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GEORGE SHAW: THE SLY AND UNSEEN DAY 25 MAY – 3 JULY 2011

George Shaw paints the landscape of his teenage years, selecting scenes of the everyday from within a half-mile radius of his childhood home on the Tile Hill estate in the West Midlands. Typical of postwar British social housing, Tile Hill could belong to any city or have originated at any time between the early 1950s and the late 1970s. The estate was created with the ingredients to provide a balanced working and social life: a school, a library, a social club, five pubs, a recreation ground and woodlands that surround and weave in between the regimented rows of houses. These seemingly arbitrary details of suburban infrastructure make up the cast of a series of paintings ongoing since the mid-1990s.

It was the experience of returning to Tile Hill after moving away, studying and a lengthy break from art, that spurred Shaw to use the estate as a source. The familiar had become displaced by time and experience and Shaw began what can be seen, at least initially, as an act of preservation. Walking around the estate, he has taken thousands of photographs, each provoked by a clash between past and present and the most powerful providing the basis of the paintings. Shaw's chosen medium, Humbrol enamel, with its predetermined colour, closer to industry than to nature, rejects any kind of painterly or art-historical celebration as well as harking back to the solitary adolescent pastime of model-making.

Despite the nostalgic, autobiographical beginnings of the paintings, Shaw's work delves far deeper. Without figure or detail to bind them to time or space, the paintings present something universally familiar: a kind of record of Englishness and youth that could come from any moment over the last thirty or forty years. At first take, the works seduce as another's fragmented memoirs: the artist's house, his local pub, the enclaves and corners where he used to hang out. There is, however, an awkwardness in this art. The palette is typically the wrong side of realistic and the quality of light is consequent upon neither rain nor sun, belonging to neither night nor day, so that the paintings exist within a permanent state of in-betweenness. Collectively, the effect dislocates their reading and function away from the personal, evoking a dream-like atmosphere which chimes with the psychological response Shaw felt when returning to this place of memory.

Shaw's paintings have a psychological charge that owes more to the history and logic of film than to those of art. The artist has been significantly influenced by British 'kitchen sink' realist cinema of the 1950s and 1960s, which was also typified by its presentation of drama that erupted from the everyday. He also enjoys a tradition of English and American thrillers and horror films from the same period, borrowing from their atmosphere of suspense and disruption, realised or implied, to otherwise 'normal' landscapes and domesticity.

Conceived as a single project, rather than a collection of individual paintings, Shaw's work has another parallel to film in its existence as a potentially endless sequence of moments paused from something much bigger. The awkward composition of the paintings, and the selection of subjects that never feel quite enough in isolation, bring more than a suggestion of impending movement – a replication perhaps of the opening shots of a film in mid-pan, setting the lie of the land or bringing about a functional shift from one chapter and location to the next. Yet resolution is never found in Shaw's art because no narrative is ever truly allowed to be created. Shaw is, instead, intrigued by the 'beginnings and middles of stories rather than the ends which always disappoint'.

A BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art touring exhibition curated by Laurence Sillars.
With thanks to Blackwall Green (a division of Heath Lambert).

BALTIC

SIMON & TOM BLOOR: HAPPY HABITAT REVISITED 7 MAY – 19 JUNE 2011

Brothers Simon & Tom Bloor have been working collaboratively since 2003, exploring moments of flawed idealism through sculpture, drawing and installations. For their SLG exhibition they present a group of new and recent works to establish a commentary on ideas of urban play as a utopian pursuit.

Introducing the exhibition in the first gallery space is a large wall text, its scale at odds with the relatively small space in which it is shown, making it difficult to read and even disconcerting. This sense of wrong-footedness continues with the text itself as it vies with its garish spray-painted background to proclaim that *It is in the city of tomorrow that we will work out our destiny*. A misquoting from *Planning for Play* by Lady Allen of Hurtwood, an influential advocate of child welfare and play, the text is rendered in a font specially designed by the Bloors, the width and straight edges of which mean it can easily be applied using masking tape. That the end result is reminiscent of the work of conceptual artist Ed Ruscha is a twist which the Bloors enjoy, referring to it as "accidental appropriation", tying in, as it does, with their wider interest in disrupting the assumed hierarchy between various materials, media and art forms. Their use of spray paint in this piece, for example, is not intended to glorify tagging or graffiti, but rather to demonstrate its potential to be brought into a 'fine art' context, simultaneously allowing them to experiment with an act of 'bruising' the architecture.

In the next room the most precious of materials, gold leaf, adorns a series of cardboard sculptures as maquettes for monuments to urban play. On closer inspection, however, their plausibility as maquettes collapses, the painted ply plinths being as much an integral part of these sculptures as the modular designs they support. Questioning the relative value or otherwise of different materials, as well as that of established boundaries between fields of practice, for example design, fine art, graffiti, the gold leaf is tainted with small gouache marks as if to translate the inevitable degradation of urban furniture into an integral part of the design. This, combined with the absurdity of a monument to play which can't be played on, points to the failed idealism which is differently portrayed in the Bloors' gouache drawing of a cartoon appropriated from *The New Yorker* magazine depicting a child with its head stuck in a sculpture.

In the next gallery the play sculptures of the artists' childhood feature once again in what at first appear to be old-fashioned photocopies on fluorescent paper, but which are in fact meticulously hand drawn copies of photographs. Alongside another outsized rendition in gouache of a *New Yorker* cartoon, a cheese plant is one of several materials in a comical but complex sculpture. Just as the ply plinths and gold sculptures were given equal material value in the monuments to play, here the plant, cardboard and fibreglass planter and brightly coloured sticks are united in a sculpture which poses more questions than it offers answers. A hybridisation of the urban and domestic, this single work meshes the languages of sculpture, household decoration and municipal design, while confounding our expectations of familiar materials.

Making direct reference to 1960s concrete planters which doubled up as bollards, the missing triangle in this version and the colourful stains revealed beneath might be understood as a visual comment on the inevitability of decay, and a critique of art's continued nostalgia for our recent past.

LIST OF WORKS

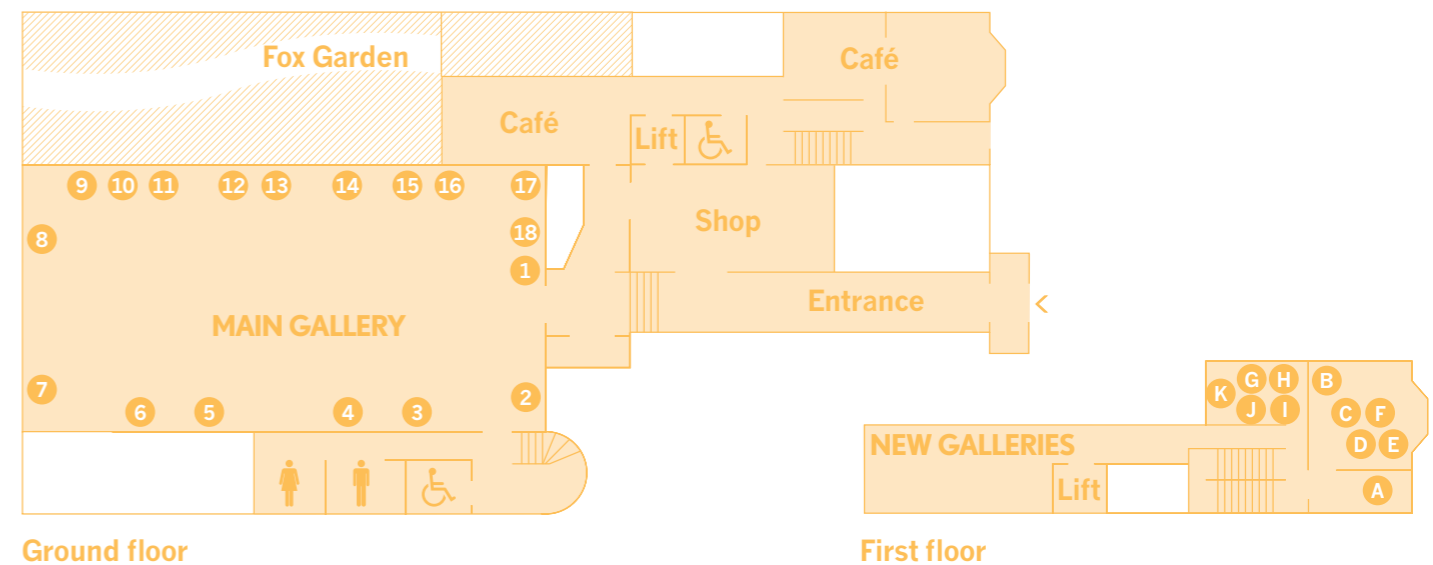
George Shaw / Main Gallery

1. *Scenes from The Passion: The Steps*, 1998
Humbrol enamel on board
43 × 53cm
James Keith Brown and Eric Diefenbach, New York
2. *Undergrowth*, 2008
Humbrol enamel on board
91 × 121cm
Private Collection
3. *The Back That Used to be The Front*, 2008
Humbrol enamel on board
92 × 121cm
Private Collection, Devon
4. *Poets Day*, 2005–6
Humbrol enamel on board
92 × 121cm
Shane Akeroyd Collection, London
5. *Scenes from The Passion: The Library and the Back of the Triple Triangle Club*, 2000
Humbrol enamel on board
75.5 × 100.5cm
Wilkinson Vintners Collection, London
6. *No Returns*, 2009
Humbrol enamel on board
147.5 × 198cm
Private Collection, Devon
7. *Scenes from The Passion: Summer Holiday, The top of Frisby Road*, 2000
Humbrol enamel on board
77 × 101cm
Nancy Delman Portnoy
8. *The End of Time*, 2008–9
Humbrol enamel on board
147.5 × 198cm
Arts Council Collection, Southbank Centre, London
9. *Scenes from The Passion: The End of August*, 2001
Humbrol enamel on board
77 × 101cm
Sarah & Louis Elson

10. *Dead End (Thursday)*, 2008
Humbrol enamel on board
77 × 101cm
Mr and Mrs Stephen Fordham
11. *Scenes from The Passion: The First Path*, 2000
Humbrol enamel on board
75.5 × 100.5cm
Private Collection
12. *The Time Machine*, 2010
Humbrol enamel on board
56 × 74.5cm
Mr and Mrs R. Burston
13. *The Assumption*, 2010
Humbrol enamel on board
56 × 74.5cm
Private Collection
14. *Ash Wednesday: 8.30am*, 2004–5
Humbrol enamel on board
91 × 121cm
Private Collection, London
15. *Scenes from The Passion: The Cop Shop*, 1999–2000
Humbrol enamel on board
43 × 53cm
Tamar Arnon & Eli Zagury
16. *Scenes from The Passion: The First Day of the Year*, 2003
Humbrol enamel on board
43 × 53cm
Carolyn Alexander, New York
17. *Scenes from The Passion: The First Day of the Holidays*, 2003
Humbrol enamel on board
43 × 53cm
Judith and Richard Greer
18. *Scenes from The Passion: Christmas Eve*, 1998
Humbrol enamel on board
43 × 53cm
Peter St John and Siw Thomas

Simon & Tom Bloor / New Galleries

- A. *The City of Tomorrow*, 2011
Spray paint
- B. *Stuck*, 2008
Gouache on paper
- C. *The fascination of islands I*, 2009
Cardboard, plaster resin, spray paint, gold leaf, gouache, plywood and emulsion
- D. *The fascination of islands IV*, 2011
Cardboard, plaster resin, spray paint, gold leaf, gouache, plywood and emulsion
- E. *The fascination of islands II*, 2011
Cardboard, plaster resin, spray paint, gold leaf, gouache, plywood and emulsion
- F. *The fascination of islands V*, 2011
Cardboard, plaster resin, spray paint, gold leaf, gouache, plywood and emulsion
- G. *No Swings*, 2011
Gouache
- H. *Sculpture for the Colonel's Estate*, 2008
Ink on Day-Glo paper
- I. *An inner city afternoon*, 2009
Ink on Day-Glo paper
- J. *Subway relief*, 2009
Ink on Day-Glo paper
- K. *What a wonderful world tomorrow will be...* 2008
Cardboard, Jesmonite, spray paint, hardwood dowel, plant



Ground floor

First floor