

📅 09 May 13



Emma Talbot

Mrs Ricks cupboard, Nottingham
1 March - 3 May 2013

Andrew Brown
(<https://www.andrewbrown.co.uk/person/andrew-brown-1/>)

Venue	PRIMARY
Location	East Midlands (https://www.andrewbrown.co.uk/locations/east-midlands)

Andrew Brown is an
artist, writer and
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The extraordinary walk-in exhibition space that is Mrs Ricks' cupboard (presumably an ex-stationery cupboard at the former school premises of Primary, Nottingham) takes on a sinister aspect with Emma Talbot's representations of the cruel and horribly topical incarceration of a young woman.

Measuring a claustrophobic 152cm x 126cm x 244cm, the cupboard might itself be seen to represent the captive mind, or the cellar in which the art student in Talbot's source of inspiration for the work, John Fowles' 'The Collector', was held after her kidnap. Within this massively-constrained space are crammed 36 paintings across three shelves, overlapping both one another and their suggested narratives. To witness them in their entirety the viewer, trapped as they are within the confines of the cupboard, is forced to manoeuvre their gaze as though through cluttered family photographs assembled across a crowded mantelpiece.

The young woman portrayed in the comic-book style paintings is a featureless everywoman, and her captor, by implication, every man. And this dark and unpredictable male gaze looms over the disempowered captive, who projects her own puny beam into potential means of escape through memory and fantasy. At her bleakest moments this is turned literally inwards onto her, and our own, solitary confinement within the inescapable physical body, that inner cave of blood, slime, and shit.

The exhibition returns us unremittingly, time and again, to the stark Beckettian realisation of all lives as forms of self-entrapment, be they within roles, routines, memories or fantasies. The fantasies of both prisoner and imprisoned emerge as somehow equivalent, as if toying with the idea of abduction itself becomes a form of fantasy escape from a half-life half-lived, the Imp of the Perverse sat smirking on the shoulder.