

landscape – one shaped by Lottery and European Social Fund money and the inevitable lobbying which surrounds it. Tenantspin, produced in collaboration with FACT, is the only tenant-run webcast channel in the UK and links each of the city's remaining tower blocks in a logistically remarkable project. But another artist-initiated project has quietly and confidently made its own presence felt in the tallest of those remaining blocks, Linosa Close. In its latest phase – 'Further up in the air', curated by Leo Fitzmaurice and Neville Gabie – an eclectic group of international artists has been living and working in empty flats dotted around the block for up to a month each and producing a remarkable body of work.

It is lottery funded and well funded, too, which is good. The artists are being recognised and paid properly for their commitment and it shows in the work and the general response from the residents. You can generally spot an awkwardness in projects of this sort when they are not being properly run – trite visual one-liners or over-earnest tributes to authenticity from artists, with a parallel suspicion from their immediate constituency that the former are privately there to snigger at their wallpaper. Curatorial confidence and adequate project resources can buy the mutual time to ease all such fears.

Having said that of course, two of the artists here do use the wallpaper in their chosen flats – Stefan Gec to construct a perfect inflated hot air sphere fashioned from a room's stripped paper (which has been deflating slowly over the course of the month) and Catherine Bertola to rework an embossed ivy pattern wallpaper by cutting round the outlines of the embossed leaves and pulling them partially away from the surface of the wall to create a hallucinatory relief. The leaves hang in petrified mid-flutter whilst a full damp flap of the uncut paper hangs loose below a window, managing to both betray and reinforce the fiction.

Fiction runs strongly through much of the work. Lothar Gotz's impeccably theatrical installation claims an entire flat – bisecting each wall surface with single coloured combinations which never repeat and installing melancholic tableaux of what may be loneliness or self-containment within them. A single bed with a crisp set of laundered clothes laid out on it; a beautifully set table for one; an armchair with a set of binoculars for a Liverpoolian James Stewart to gaze through his rear window at the flat opposite, which is no longer there. Tom Woolford leaves a flat apparently untouched, but for the one windowless room of the toilet just inside the front door, which he has reworked as a brutalist monastic cell with a single slab of white concrete functioning as a seat. It's bravely stark and oddly affecting. And on the very top floor Will Self spent his month gazing upon the panoramic view over Liverpool and constructed a short story – displayed now on the walls as a forensic array of typed pages, pencilled schema and photographic details of the city below. As ever, his prose is precise and pitiless. Yet there's a pathos here too. The bare rooms, battered desk and gas ring for coffee-making are as clearly equal material witnesses to the impervious city beneath as are the authors' fictional claims.

Inevitably, the allegorical call of gravity figures repeatedly. As with Gec's work, Gary Perkins alludes to the fragility of human attempts to rise off the ground by turning his flat and balcony into a kind of laboratory attempting to breed a giant beanstalk. Equipment and pressed flower versions of his attempts are scattered casually through the flat as if following a sudden breakthrough. Gabie's own work 'soft strips' one of the flats back to the

concrete and metal of its shell and compounds the detritus of floorboards and fittings into a perfect cube of Serra-like presence and weight – albeit a vernacular version redolent of the 'dirty Modernism' coined by Ian Rawlinson for his Chisenhale show last year.

Fitzmaurice has an equally tender relationship to the detail of the flats – his cardboard packages and junk mail, divested of text and logos by scalpel, are arranged as beautiful echoes of the service vents and ducts whose modest presence criss-crosses the building. They have that other omnipresent and inevitable feeling which runs through the show – that of a requiem for the life and lives of these flats. Perhaps this is typified by Paul Rooney's triptych of videos, soundtracked by a cappella interpretations of the previous owner's memories of her flat. Modest and poignant and characteristically generous.

And on that note, there's melancholy here of course, but it's one of choice rather than sentiment and if anything the whole project holds up a defiant mirror to the familiar displaced artist's lament of 'Gentrification and other disasters'. As the churches reclaim the skyline in this regional city, Fitzmaurice and Gabie have grabbed some of that sky and put it to use, with the resourcefulness to use the abandoned dreams of others as scaffolding. ■

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