

London Round-up 2

Domo Baal • Annely Juda • Tintype •

St Clement's Hospital

Performance art came into its own in the 1960s and, as an important pioneer in the field, **Stuart Brisley** has been somewhat typecast as an exponent of this one-time transgressive medium to the detriment of his various other contributions. Film and video, painting and drawing, lecturing and writing have all been used by Brisley to interrogate oppressive cultural and political forms. Brisley is interested in society's coercive hierarchies, its patterns of privilege and denial, and has over the years employed whatever means were appropriate at a given time to continue and expand his critical investigations.

It would be a mistake, then, to see the suite of four large watercolour and gouache paintings of the English landscape Brisley showed at Domo Baal towards the end of 2013 as being a backwards step. Painted between 2010 and 2012, *Shadow*, *Pit*, *Sink* and *Jerusalem* form a quartet of imaginary English landscapes, the point of departure for which is their author's meditations upon how William Blake's egalitarian optimism, as expressed in his popular work *Jerusalem*, 1808, has been transformed, via Hubert Parry's 1916 musical adaptation of the poem, into a kind of surrogate national anthem. Watercolour painting is conventionally regarded as an affirmative, celebratory mode. In Brisley's reinscription of the medium the stock pastoral prettiness of the English scene is ironised, torn up and, one might suggest, more realistically remade. These paintings convey a sense of disorder, darkness and savage abandonment, of nature run wild, the world as it is outside the gates of the paradisiacal garden. *Pit*, 2011, for example, renders an obscure patch of tangled brambles and trees as a chaotic, recursive aberration, a scraggy trap rather than the idealistic bloom of would-be timeless beauty and grace. Given the crumbling condition of contemporary Britain the metaphor is right on the button and, in Brisley's hands, the sublime career of the wishy-washy watercolourist has been sternly taken to task.

Seeing things as they are, and not as certain interested parties would prefer others to see them, is a theme which also runs through **Suzanne Treister's** 'In the Name of Art and Other Recent Works' at Annely Juda. In this show the level of information overload is, to borrow a phrase from Stewart Home, cranked up really high. Treister has packed into the gallery a large body of recent work. Not only are there a considerable number of individual pieces on