



Visual trickery: viewed upside down, this drawing reveals a sinister side

Don't trust your eyes

EXHIBITION

Eyes, Lies and Illusions

Hayward, SE1

Nick Hackworth

THIS fascinating exhibition leaves one with the strong suspicion that there once flourished a world of visual artifice and trickery more subtle and mysterious than that served up today on our film and TV screens by the power of CGI.

Eyes, Lies and Illusions is a thematic exploration of the art of visual perception from the Renaissance onwards, drawing on the extraordinary collection of pre-cinematic optical objects and related ephemera belonging to German experimental film-maker Werner Nekes.

It was an art studied and exploited to indulge the full range of human motivations, from straight wonder in its weird effects upon our perception to the communication of censored information, from the political to the pornographic.

The show moves from darkness into light, beginning with the ancient art of shadowplay, moving into tricks of the

light, examining perspective and the psychology of perception, before finishing with early attempts to capture the fourth dimension — time — visually with the birth of cinema.

Classics of unusual visual perception abound, from bendy mirrors to a full-sized Ames room — designed by painter Adelbert Ames — into which you can peer to see people magically shrink and grow as they move along the deceptively sloping, angled floors.

There are also pieces of optically themed contemporary art interspersed among the exhibits, including a famous light-projection work by Anthony McCall and a typically spooky installation by Tony Oursler.

But the stars of the show are the objects and pieces that hold within them hidden messages, symbols and signs. A selection of “seditious toys”, such as walking canes and chess pieces, hide the profiles of famous and dangerous icons in their forms, from Marie-Antoinette to George Washington, revealed only when a shadow is cast; and a myriad of documents, prints and cards give up their innocuous surfaces when backlit to reveal everything from the coming apocalypse to the pleasures of fornication.

● Until 3 January, 2005.

Information: 08703 800 400.

And then the band swung harder . . .

THE ARTS Council disburses public money in mysterious ways, but sending US piano heroine Geri Allen on tour with Edinburgh drummer Tom Bancroft's 14-piece Orchestra Interrupto — “We're never together very long, due to prison sentences, drug rehab, you know,” — was an oddball risk that has paid off.

The Spitz, a spartan space with few chairs and no cloakroom, attracts fans strictly for the music, and they were baying for more after an absorbing night of

JAZZ

Geri Allen and the Orchestra Interrupto The Spitz

Jack Massarik

both free and disciplined playing. Bancroft, though likened to Carla Bley, John Zorn and Charles Mingus, is an orchestrator of boisterous energy rather than harmonic ingenuity, but he's strong on melody and paces

soloists effectively from the drumkit.

After a ragged start things steadily improved, notably so when Geri Allen arrived. Her solo-piano interlude, full of warm, shapely ideas and off-centre rhythm patterns, raised the bar for everyone. The band swung harder, ensemble passages developed real richness, and Bancroft's occasional use of the bodhran drum added Celtic colour.

Yeast (the crew whose visuals enhanced Denys Baptiste's suite Let Freedom Ring!) were on form

again. They projected an X-ray view of someone eating and fast-forward views of Blair and Bush babbling, both disturbing images, during sparkling solos by altoist Laura Macdonald and trombonist Patrick Charbonnier. Ornate Bessie (“based on Ornette Coleman and Count Basie, but not quite right”) and a sumptuous ballad, Everybody Is a Bit Weird when Alone, starring the leader's twin brother, tenorist

Phil Bancroft, were further highlights of an unexpectedly rewarding evening.

Wallowing in low values

TATE Modern's first major exhibition devoted to video art brings together the work of 10 fashionable, mid-career, international artists.

When the genre first emerged, inspired by newly affordable video cameras, great Utopian hopes were held out for it. It would be art that could be mass-produced and so would avoid infection from filthy, capitalist art dealers and instead communicate directly with the people.

Those hopes were misguided. The dealers simply limited supply, selling videos to be displayed just as a painting would be — on a gallery wall. But, as this show reveals, your average video is worse, and far more irritating, than your average painting.

Unlike painters or sculptors, video artists are in direct competition with their fellow film-makers in the film, TV and advertising industries who have far greater resources. So most do the obvious thing, and make a virtue of their poverty and unpopularity. They wallow in low production values and tedious pseudo-significant subject matter.

Untitled (Bangkok) by Bojan Sarcevic, is a perfect example, featuring the artist strolling through the streets of Bangkok, neither tourist nor local but, apparently “alienated subject”. Mexican Francis Alÿs shows a 24-hour

EXHIBITION

Time Zones: Film and Video

Tate Modern

Nick Hackworth

recording of the goings-on in the huge Zocalo Square in Mexico City, with people moving to the rhythms of the sun. Wolfgang Staehle displays a live video feed showing the unchanging aspect of Comburg monastery in Germany, contrasting its apparently medieval time-keeping with modern franticness.

Video-making means that many thousands of interesting but fairly throwaway ideas have lived to see the light of day to, ultimately, little point.

There are exceptions. Chinese artist Yang Fundong's beautiful, if slightly overdone, black-and-white video charts changes in Chinese society. Yael Bartana's King of the Hill is rarer still, making an effective and intelligent political point about Israeli/US-inspired macho-ness, in under eight minutes of amateur shot footage. But they are exceptions to a very poor rule.

● Until 2 January, 2005.

Information: 020 7887 8008.

IN LONDON TONIGHT

BY RICHARD GODWIN

Plan your evening's entertainment with our guide to the best films, shows, gigs and one-off events that are still taking bookings (at the time of going to press).

PICK OF THE NIGHT

Punk: A True and Dirty Tale

Until 10pm, The Hospital, 24 Endell Street, WC2. £6, £4 concs. Tube: Covent Garden

A fascinating ragbag of artefacts, including Vivienne Westwood's garments and handwritten Sex Pistols lyrics. How ironic that such nostalgia is the antithesis of what punk stood for.

020 7170 9100

THE BIG FILM

Bride & Prejudice (12A)

Across

London

Jane

Austen

gets a

Bollywood

makeover.

Bend it

Like

Beckham

director

Gurinder

Chadha's

adaptation

stars

Namrata

Shirodkar

and

Aishwarya

Rai,

above.

Fantastical but exuberant.



BOOK EVENT

Ewan McGregor and Charley Boorman

7pm, Logan Hall, 20 Bedford Way, WC1. £8, £6 concs.

Tube: Russell Square

Having journeyed 20,000 miles around the world on their bikes, the two actors have documented their travels in diary form entitled Long Way Round. They read extracts and sign copies.

0870 420 2777

BEST COMEDY

Bat Boy: The Musical

7.45pm, Shaftesbury Theatre,

Shaftesbury Avenue, WC2.

£15-£37.50. Tube: Piccadilly Circus

A typically silly tale from the US tabloid National Enquirer about a bat/boy hybrid is the subject of this kitsch musical. Completely insane and riotously good fun.

020 7379 5399

IN THE PARTY MOOD

Rodney P and Shystie

8pm, Suga Suga, 187 Wardour Street, W1. £5. Tube: Tottenham Court Road

The British urban scene is in rude health at the moment. This acoustic showcase features both old and new, including veteran rhymester Rodney P and machine-gun MC Shystie.

020 7434 2118

... AND FOR FREE

Eddie Izzard

6pm, Virgin Megastore,

14-19 Oxford Street W1. FREE!

Tube: Tottenham Court Road A chance to meet the popular cross-dressing comedian, who talks about his latest film, The Cat's Miaow, out on DVD today.

020 7631 1234

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