

Glossy, but a little dull

NICK HACKWORTH | EVENING STANDARD | Monday 30 September 2002 00:00 |



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The Evening Standard

Within their selfcontained world, the subjects and forms manifest in Hume's paintings make sense and cohere. It is a world described by his fans as slick, decorative and modern, where images culled from both the media and direct observation, reduced and simplified by the artist's eye and hand, rest dumbly, but happily, beneath a seamless, shiny surface. Support for Hume's style has seen him become one of the most successful artists of his generation.

But however popular his anodyne style may be, it produces work that is curiously joyless and at times desperately unattractive and so, though the work is hard to fault if taken on its own terms, it is equally hard to celebrate.

In this show of his latest work, all produced within the past nine months, Hume presents nine paintings in his familiar style, made with household gloss on aluminium, along with a series of na'ive charcoal studies and two large bronze representations of snowmen.

The charcoal studies, an exercise in simple mark-making, are sometimes quite elegant studies of both the human body and plants. Executed on dark, grey, matt backgrounds, the drawings immediately set a downbeat note for the exhibition.

Round the corner, the gloss surfaces of the paintings glimmer with reflections in the bright and shadowless space of the main gallery. But beneath the surfaces a muted palette of dull and dark greys, greens and purples sustains the reserved mood.

In large expanses of flat, dull colour, human forms, plants and other vague shapes, such as in *The Moon*, are delineated. Several pieces hover between figuration and abstraction.

In *Wet Nurse*, a large brown breast is also reduced to a shape among other abstract shapes and passages of patterns.

Similarly, in *At the Party*, one of the best pieces, the form of a young woman is disrupted by passages of clashing colour. Perhaps it is the sculptures of the snowmen that best sum up this exhibition.

Each is made of three rough balls, of decreasing size, plonked on top of each other and gloss painted. They lack all features but succeed in looking like comically impotent snowmen, inert and oblivious to the world.

Showing at White Cube, N1, until 26 October (020 7930 5373). ■