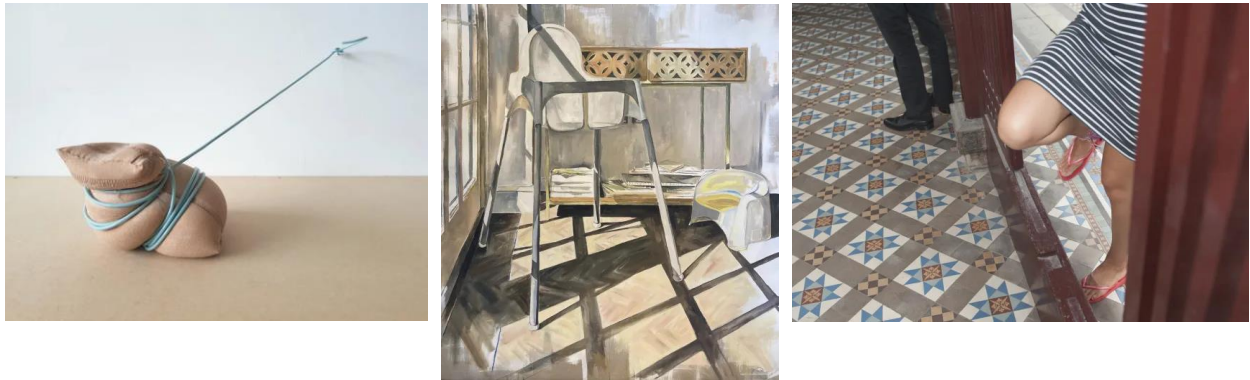


Source: Instagram @andrewcrossstuff 17 June 2024



Mirrors Fog Over When I Breathe

Artists: Helen Barff, Katherine Perrins and Denise Webber

Centrespace Gallery, Bristol, curated by Freeny Yianni of Close Ltd

<https://www.closeltd.com/exhibitions/32-mirrors-fog-over-when-i-breathe-group-show/>

In its written introduction the exhibition proposes an evocation of "being alive and physically present", without much further explained. Which is no bad thing. Plenty enough contemporary art, and the manner of its presentation, can be tediously self-knowing and eager to announce its artistic meaning and social value. In their own idiosyncratic ways, the works here are very comfortable, as it were, in their own skin. On the cusp between one thing and another; of being something definite and something uncertain.

Photography is often an anxious art form and prone to assertiveness. In the case of Denise Webber's work something more quietly assured and humble is going on. What makes these sensitive orderly prints so engaging is not only how the content is ambiguous; any reasons for their making are far from immediately obvious. The work is 'about' specific things but what exactly doesn't necessarily need to be known. The importance is felt anyway.

Painting, on the other hand, has been declared 'dead' so many times no one seems to worry whether it is art or not. Which means an artist like Katherine Perrins, respectful of painting traditions but not bound by them, simply gets on with observing how everyday situations move in and out of vividness and, for whatever reasons, attempts to hold such moments in paint.

In the meantime, Helen Barff's sculptures, whatever they may or may not be, quite cheerfully teeter on the edge of collapse in formal, material and figurative terms.

Coincidentally, on the weekend of visiting I read this by Howard Jacobson (albeit written in a more political context): "Art finds the language it needs in the course of expressing itself. It is exploratory, self-contradictory, provisional. The minute art makes up its mind, it's no longer art". And that is about all we do need to know.

Andrew Cross is a visual artist, writer, curator and an associate lecturer at Southampton Solent University