

Matt Bryans
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 Gilda Williams p.305



than mass culture. Even his belief, rooted in an '80s discourse, that art always reproduces what already exists allows the specific history of the Christmas tree to shine forth as the material for his art. In place of the reproduction of a contemporary, elegant universe of design, as in his "Furniture Sculptures," 1978–, we find the paradox of a temporally coded and materially perishable poetic accumulation of objects referring to nature that at the same time carries with it art-historical allusions to Duchamp's coal bags and Warhol's silver clouds.

Also shown here was a video, *sans titre*, 2003, projected in the entryway of Y8, which literally revolves around the Christmas tree. The video camera moves in circles around a decorated tree, apparently too quickly for the autofocus, which randomly selects various points to focus on. In this way the spatial context of the image is completely dissolved, yielding a desirable surface of shimmering veils and ambiguities. The work, which Armleder has also done in the same way with fireworks and the neon lights he often uses, is evocative of experimental films of the '60s and early '70s. The light appears both as a physical phenomenon, referring to the lens and the technology of the camera, and as a medium for a glamorous play with glitz and gloom.

—Nina Möntmann

Translated from German by Sara Ogger.

LONDON

Matt Bryans
 KATE MACGARRY

The faded wood cladding of a backyard shed. A rain-washed bulletin board of lost, overlapping messages; the close-up detail of a Braque painting in a typically Cubist palette of blues, grays, and browns; the innumerable rooftops of a distant, crowded city: Matt Bryans's architecturally scaled installation, formed by squarish, mosaic-like pieces of newsprint, conjures multiple images in varying scales. For this untitled work, dated 2006, the artist cut color photographs from newspapers, then proceeded to partially erase them—sometimes randomly, sometimes following the contours of the original picture—leaving smudged, bluish-reddish-grayish smears on the newsprint. When erasing, the artist could not be sure what hue would emerge—not necessarily the shade predominating in the printed photograph. Traces of the underlying photographic portrait or landscape occasionally remain despite the compulsive erasing, but in general, the rectangular cutouts have been abstracted from their original representational function. Then, working almost like a painter, Bryans arranges the resulting collection of a few hundred blurry, irregular newsprint sheets into patches of a predominant color—shapeless sections of orange gray, or slate blue,

or yellowy brown—before attaching each sheet to the wall, creating a floor-to-ceiling, corner-to-corner, lightly flapping paper covering of two entire gallery walls.

Another untitled installation, 2005–2006, was made of small sections cut from Christmas trees, white in color and with a pattern of hollows on them, each about the size of a child's fist and looking like a very smooth rounded stone or perhaps the skull of a bird. Once the branches had been lopped off, each small stub of a trunk was laboriously whittled down to a highly polished surface. Evidently these evergreens, sacrificed to the seasonal festivities, have in nature a sort of "joint" or singular cross-section in their trunks from which branches sprout in every direction. Bryans collects the discarded trees, recovers the all-important 360-degree joint in each, then chops and sands these cylindrical bits of wood down to yield the desired bonelike artifact. This work, comprising 221 pieces, took two years to produce.

"Post-studio" artworks created directly in the exhibition space have become common in recent decades but, unlike most, Bryans's require vast outlays of time and effort. His is an intimate, tactile approach to art-making—erasing small sheets of newsprint or whittling wood, later to be assembled in the gallery—that can be pursued anytime anywhere, like knitting or Sudoku, then methodically resumed on the train or during a coffee break, requiring at most a small desk and chair; it's infinitely interruptible, portable, and concentration-free. And just as his work requires no studio, it demands no art materials as such either. Christmas trees are discarded by the cartload each year in early January; old newspapers are easily collected for free. This is a frugal art, which requires investments only of time and intention and whose materials are made to reveal unforeseen properties.

Bryans is after the dry, weathered quality found, say, in frescoes exposed to the elements, or in driftwood and other products of natural erosion. In effect, the artist constructs contemporary ruins: relics suggestive of a decaying past but actually formed very deliberately by the artist's unwaveringly devoted effort.

Bryans is an art-laborer, an ecologist, a visionary, an alchemist. Bearing the traces of his precisely chosen, subtractive artistic processes (whittling, sanding, erasing), the elaborate artworks that result are as much a surprise to the artist as they are, so pleasurably, to viewers.

—Gilda Williams



Matt Bryans, *Untitled*, 2005–2006, wood, 78 1/4 x 70 1/4".

Jaime Gili
 RIFLEMAKER

For his solo debut, "Jaime Gili Makes Things Triangular," the London-based Venezuelan artist made good use of Soho gallery Riflemaker's funky, atmospheric exhibition space. Still redolent of the gunsmith's shop it once was, this is no white cube. And for heaven's sake watch your step on the treacherously dark stairs to the basement viewing room. Gili installed his paintings chockablock, with massive freestanding ones dividing up the room and black-and-white offset posters covering the ceiling. It was as if he wanted each work to distract us from