

Highlights: Chelsea College Of Arts – Postgraduate Summer Show 2015

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Arts—Group Exhibition | by Harry Seymour

Attending a student art show is always something of a mixed rag. Whilst it's a wonderful chance to see the work of fresh-faced 'up and coming' artists, and get a sense of the trends, themes, and aesthetics we might expect in gallery shows over the next few years; the best work is always at risk of being crowded out by less successful experiments. It was with this slightly resigned attitude that Candid attended the opening of the Chelsea College of Arts Postgraduate Summer Show on Friday, 4 September – only to be pleasantly surprised.



David Icko, Overwhelm Detector, 2015, mixed media. Image courtesy of the artist.

The Chelsea College of Arts, one of the colleges of the University of the Arts, London, has a fantastic campus on Millbank, just next to Tate Britain. Three of its large, imposing buildings are open to the public for the duration of the Summer Show, with work on display from students in their MA courses in Fine Art, Textile Design, Curating & Collections, Graphic Design Communication, and Interior & Spatial Design. The buildings are large and labyrinthine, and the map handed out at the entrance did little to clarify this, but we found it was actually more enjoyable to simply wander between the many exhibition spaces, seeing for ourselves how they fit together and what each course had focused on.



Kelise Franclemont, 'A Walk through Palestine (collectable, artefact, relic, souvenir)', 2015, installation of printed posters, found objects, and sound. Image courtesy the artist.

Upon entering the main courtyard, we went into the building straight ahead first, which featured work by the Fine Art, Textile Design, and Curating & Collections students. The spaces were crowded, however, the curation of the show was handled well with an effort to place works that dialogued with each other placed in the same space. There was a wide variety of media used by the artists, though perhaps with a preference for installation and sculpture. Some artists whose work stood out among the crowd were Kelise Franclemont, whose video, sound, and found object installation 'a walk through Palestine (collectable, artefact, relic, souvenir)' raised important questions of historical accuracy, the ethics of tourism, and cultural heritage; Andrew Rickett, whose wax and mixed-media sculptures were visceral yet intriguing; and Linda Vigdorcika, whose sculptural installations used natural materials and muted colours to great effect (we particularly responded to an 'inside out' sheep made of clear vinyl and wood, stuffed with unwashed wool: simple but clever enough to make us pause and look again in the midst of a busy and noisy exhibition).

In the Textile Design section of the show, there was a clear emphasis on sustainability in fashion, a theme which the students addressed in a variety of ways. Nicola Cliff exhibited

a beautiful selection of patterned textiles, all made with natural dyes, and Chaithanya Ramkumar invented a fascinating zero-waste method of pattern making and garment draping inspired by origami. The clear favourite amongst the audience however was Shiyi Cheng's 'Stay in Touch' installation, which presented a series of tactile experiences to demonstrate how touch is missing from many of our everyday interactions.



Seulgi Kang, Relational Aesthetics, 2015, mixed media. Image courtesy of the artist.

In the other large building, to the left as you enter the main courtyard of Chelsea College of Arts, there was an even larger display. The Fine Art students were jam-packed on the upper floor of the building, which seemed to go on forever. Unfortunately there were more derivative pieces in this section of the exhibition than elsewhere (think street art inspired installations, 'primitive' figural painting, and video montages). However, there were still some highlights which made it worth the effort of navigating through. Perhaps because it was so crowded, we found ourselves drawn to those works that offered a moment of calm and introspection. Seulgi Kang's video installation showed her artistic process as she created and then destroyed her own work, and the black surroundings and sticky, squishy floor underfoot as you watched it heightened the experience by putting the viewer ever-so-slightly on edge. We also enjoyed Joana Groba Casillas's abstract reflection on immigration through sounds and video. Frances Hogg's colourful patterns and paintings were fresh and vibrant, a pleasant reprieve from all the installation, video work, and moody self-portraits. Shuwen Wang's installation with sea rocks was also simple, yet surprisingly effective, and David Icko's 'Overwhelm Detector' carrot robots (you'll understand when you see them) made us chuckle in spite of ourselves.

The Postgraduate Summer Show makes for an enjoyable and entertaining display. The quality of work was high, despite some ill-advised pieces, and on a less crowded day the casual visitor might get a lot out of it. Many of the works on display are for sale as well, so pick up an exhibition catalogue or a business card for your favourite artist. The show is free and open to the public until 10 September.