Calum Colvin- Brief Encounter
Walter Dahn- Photoworks 1983-89

Exhibition 14 April- 20 May 1990
Admission Free

Calum Colvin

Calum Colvin (b. 1961, Glasgow) is one of the most exciting young artists at work in Britain today. In recent years he has developed a unique and highly sophisticated means of expression. Colvin uses photography to record the elaborate tableaux which he creates in his studio, the finished work taking the form of large cibachrome prints. These *mises en scene* are fantastic, complicated interiors which distort all sense of proportion and perspective. Painted human figures are painstakingly transcribed across the surfaces of furniture and other domestic clutter. Clever visual puns are produced by means of anamorphic perspective, cross-reference and experimentation with form. This, for example, in *The Temptation of St Anthony* 1989, the protruding wing of a toy 747 airliner can also be interpreted as the eyes and nose of St Anthony, and in *Minotaur* 1989, a toy horse becomes- from the camera's angle- a self-portrait. Colvin's scenic inventions disclose his preoccupation with illusion which combines the mythic and classical with the popular and throw-away. Images from familiar masterpieces such as Michelangelo's *Bound Slave* or Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* are juxtaposed with Superman, Dan Dare and Oor Wullie.

With subtle and often irreverential humour, the artist explores questions of personal identity and gender. In the triptych *Deaf man's Villa* 1989, the figure of the blue boy is superimposed onto a female torso, thereby fusing their forms. Also, the kilted Action Man, which journeys throughout the works, takes on the role of the artist's alter ego and parodies common clichés of Scottish culture and masculinity.

Colvin, who is based in London, has recently begun exploring the use of the computer graphic aid 'paintbox' in the production of his images. The exhibition includes these new, computer generated montages along with work from the last two years. This is Colvin's first major exhibition in a public gallery.

Walter Dahn

Underlying Walter Dahn's (b. 1954, near Krefeld, W. Germany) work is the question of what motivates people to produce art objects. He examines people's hopes, fears, ambitions and surroundings. Yet his works have little

to do with representations or reproduction of reality; they are unsentimental and clear-cut, transforming stereotypes, configurations and clichés into surprising pictorial creations. The focus of Dahn's attention is human development and it's social context, the emphasis being on his own personal response to the artefacts of other cultures. He attempts to balance a direct emotional reaction with the conventional means whereby we experience the cultural remains of other societies- glossy magazine photographs, museum displays, documentary film etc. He considers there exists a vital correlation between his own imagery and things from the past and his output- of painting, drawing, screenprinting, photography and sculpture- is characterised by a sincere respect for the visual qualities of primitive work.

With the possible exception of drawing, taking photographs and experimenting with darkroom techniques is the activity on which Dahn has concentrated most consistently in recent years. Despite their fundamental differences, for him, taking photographs and making drawings are closely related practises. In the former he demonstrates an eagerness to experiment freely, exploiting the camera's potential and using the darkroom like an alchemist's laboratory. This process, which has been described as "painting without painting", produces unique prints in which familiar motifs are imbued with a strange and often disquieting sense of mystery.

Dahn studied with Joseph Beuys in Dusseldorf and from 1980-83 was a member of the artist's group Mulheimer Freiheit. He lives and works in Cologne.

This exhibition is an expanded version of a show organised by the Museum fur Gegenwartskunst, Basle. It comprises work produced between 1983 and 1989.

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