

# Art

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Include me out!  
Dave Beech

Horizontality  
Dan Smith

Jasper Johns  
Marjorie Welsh

Bani Abidi  
Profile by Virginia Whiles

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Reserved 2006  
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ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND

## Jess Flood-Paddock/Liz Murray

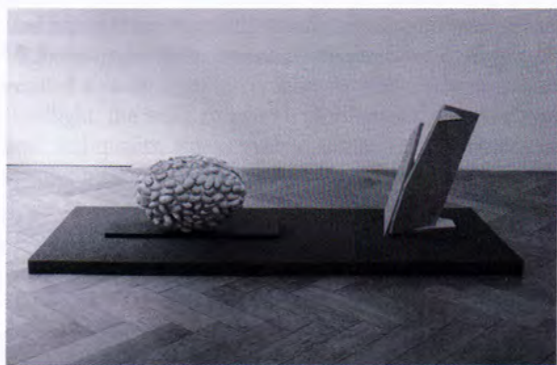
Standpoint Gallery London February 29 to April 5

To position a gallery as being concerned with sculpture over and above the full range of contemporary practices is a bold and unusual move. The very word 'sculpture' implies a concern with the making of objects, and a certain intensity to the interrogation of that making that some might consider rather *recherché*. This exhibition is the first in a series of new commissions that invite artists to make sculptural and site-specific works for Standpoint, a longstanding gallery space attached to studios, which is also known for its annual award for young sculptors. The terms of the encounter are, therefore, fairly clearly set out.

Liz Murray has responded with site-specific work that draws on the industrial building's history as a veneer workshop, in order to locate her work within particular social and temporal frameworks. However worthy the research, this oblique justification is hardly necessary or indeed legible in the final pieces she has installed: *Stooge*, 2008, is a big dumb stud wall that blocks out the light and guides you through into the rear of the gallery. There may be some connection with the fact that this space was used as a loading bay for timber, but it is the immediate physical presence of this big ugly wall that dominates rather than its history. Splintered holes punctuate the wall, letting through small shafts of light that spell out the title in huge letters. Well, most of it at any rate. The final 'E' doesn't fit on the wall, leaving us with a deadpan 'STOOG' instead.

Another piece utilises an existing platform of pine flooring from which, we are informed, a secretary once dispensed docketts to drivers via a small window. This section of flooring has been cleaned up, sanded and varnished by Murray and now sits gleaming under the bright gallery lights. You could draw some connections between this radiant object and the story of the veneer company, transformations of hierarchies, value, time, that sort of thing. But equally you might draw similar conclusions from any one of the former industrial buildings in London's East End that have undergone radical refurbishment in the last ten years. Forget the rubric of site-specificity and simply admire the visual brilliance of this ultra high-gloss bit of pine – lovely.

Jess Flood-Paddock is, like Murray, another fairly recent graduate of one of London's art institutions. Her work takes the form of individual medium-sized objects that might stand on a tabletop or plinth in traditional sculptural fashion. Here they are presented slightly apologetically at floor level on low slabs of black foam. Although there are conversations going on between several of her pieces, they generally present themselves individually and don't interact with Murray's work at all. Each work is highly anthropomorphic, showing signs of being handmade in clay, cardboard, newspaper, or some other impoverished material. Various strategies of making have been employed: a pair of football-sized rice crackers, *Chinese Rice Cracker*, 2007, seem to have been modelled with pebbles stuck on for sesame seeds, while another similar form is perhaps cast. *The Guardian*, 2007, is an agglomeration of gravel, concrete, cement and clay, the whole thing subsequently covered



with patches of torn newspaper; *Model Plinths*, 2008, is neatly constructed from coloured cardboard, while *San Pellegrino* contains a bottle, and *Phone* (both 2007) is just a useless model of a mobile phone with a candle for a screen and three slight indentations for buttons.

It will be apparent that Flood-Paddock is circling around the idea of sculpture, employing these different strategies and processes as ways to approach the generation of a final autonomous form. The one stable element is the idea of the discrete, almost hermetic sculptural object that enables the emergent visibility of each process. Representation is tested with a nest of wooden fragments that only come together when you read the title, *Penguin*, 2005, and look back to discern a cute lopsided bird complete with beak and wing. The same sort of thing happens with *Model Plinths*, which start to

Liz Murray  
l to r  
*Stooge* 2008  
*Chicane* 2008

Jess Flood-Paddock  
*Chinese Rice Cracker* 2008  
*Penguin* 2008



Emma McNally  
installation view

look like miniature scale models purely because of their title. The effect of seeing eight of these pieces together is to render them almost as examples, rather than specific instances. Examples of possible ways to make, act and do. Perhaps this is one way in which the idea of sculpture might be rehabilitated for our post-medium age, as a starting point or sounding board for less tangible concerns. Sculpture then starts to sound less like a genre or a medium and more like an investigative tool. ■

MARK WILSHER is an artist.

## Emma McNally: Fields, Charts, Surroundings

T1+2 Artspace London January 25 to March 2

In the scholarly essay accompanying Emma McNally's 'Fields, Charts, Soundings' at T1+2 Artspace, Ana Balona de Oliveira provides a list of possible readings of McNally's drawings. They may be, she suggests, perceived as 'aerial views, battlefield maps, geological formations, oceanic charts, disease transmissions, animal migratory routes, molecule structures [or] black holes'. The sentence in fact ends with an 'etc', leaving the list of potential perceptions of the work open to further elaboration. De Oliveira is right to emphasise the polysemic aspect of these complicated, energetic drawings. But though one's initial impression may be of maps or other kinds of compressed or abstracted informational forms, in the end these works are fully independent of the types of object they superficially resemble.

Perhaps these drawings – there are some 20 works in the show (all pencil on paper, 2007) – can hold such a multiplicity of allusions because the marks of which they are comprised are

themselves extremely diverse, with their use of scale (ranging from the vast *Field 1*, measuring 229 x 304.5cm, to pieces on A4 paper) also adding to their suggestive disposition. McNally is technically very inventive, generating with the pencil a multiplicity of lines, dots, scratches or tracks, building up individual works from literally thousands and thousands of marks that frequently make up specific units or shapes – thick, solid circles; tiny, sharp dots; wiggly yet rigid lines; equilateral triangles laid point to point; blocked-in squares containing crosses – all overlaid and underpinned with neat grids and other reticulated structures than run across the entire surface. The result is that the drawings, whatever else they might seem to represent, can also be considered as archives or storehouses of what linguists term iterable units, forms akin to letters of the alphabet that may be used to produce meaning; in short a kind of writing. But although a key aspect of languages comprising distinct units is that they employ a strictly restricted (and thereby repeatable) lexicon of signs, the reading of McNally's work as writing in the conventional sense is thwarted by the fact that the marks used are both fixed and fluid. While a substantial number of the signs McNally makes are repeated over and over again, many of them are not so much iterable as amorphous, instances of scribble or at least what one might term a bastardised version of a sign or distinct unit. To take the analogy further, such forms are like handwriting that is so unclear and unstructured as to render the message unreadable. Such imprecision (though it is of course here combined with a plethora of precise marks) is a move towards what Roland Barthes referred to as the signifier without the signified, to the playful indulgence in and deployment of the pure sign.

This combination of iterable and non-iterable markings gives McNally's work, placed as it is between coded representation and loose but allusive drawing, a productive ambiguity that serves to remind us that, in spite of all the clichéd chatter in art schools and in the artworld proper to the effect that art is a

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Neville Gabie Leo Fitzmaurice Dryden Goodwin Marie-Jeanne Hoffner David Ogden Dan Perjovschi

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Print the Legend: The Myth of the West  
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