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## Contemporary Eye: Crossovers

Pallant House Gallery, Chichester  
2 October 2010 – 6 March 2011

Reviewed by: [Anna Cady »](#)

Contemporary Eye: Crossovers.

by ANNA CADY AND HELEN MARTINO

An email announcing the inclusion of works by Grayson Perry and Tracey Emin in an exhibition entitled: *Contemporary Eye: Crossovers* at Pallant House in Chichester was bound to attract attention. In fact, due to the value of their work and the resulting constraints of conservation, these pieces are the least successfully curated in what is an ambitious, and in many respects, great project. Would it not have been braver to refuse Tracey Emin's chair (*There's a lot of money in chairs* 1994) which is installed in a domestic setting yet sadly encased in a vast Perspex box? And Grayson Perry's magnificently subversive pots miss the opportunity to stand proud in the Queen Anne townhouse, they lurk, denuded of their power by purple labels and an ugly showcase.

Mistakes of this nature made a potentially great show into a patchy one.

The exhibition aims to enable new interpretations of the permanent collection housed in the 18<sup>th</sup> century rooms of Pallant House through contemporary interventions and also to provide opportunities for interesting juxtapositions of old and new, domestic and fine-art in the galleries of the new extension.

Pallant House Gallery is prepared to take risks and has a strong history of commissioning artists to create site specific works such as Susie MacMurray's spectacular installation 'Shell' in 2006/7. *Crossovers* is not a site specific work by a single artist, rather it consists of loaned works from private collections which extend throughout both house and contemporary gallery spaces.

Artwise Curators and the Collections from which the works are loaned are acknowledged in the catalogue and website, but nowhere can I find a complete list of the artists or the works. It is a curators' exhibition and it is in this light therefore that the exhibition title 'Crossovers' should be challenged.

The curators write that the exhibition: '...explores the importance of artistic process, with a specific focus on artists who incorporate elements of traditional craft approaches...' they speak of the relevance of 'the hand of the artist...'

Surely we have been here before? Is the question of how particular materials relate to traditional craft skills or to fine art practice really still an issue?

The works included in *Crossovers* are in concept and execution variously: *installation* (eg. Butterfly wallpaper by Damien Hirst as backdrop to Debbie Lawson's *Spider* 2008), *sculpture* (eg. 'Nina's Luggage, Katy's convoy' by Nina Saunders) and *image* (eg. *Georgie and Orchids* by Gary Hume). True, in all cases the making is of fine quality and technique and fabric matter. Yet how does this



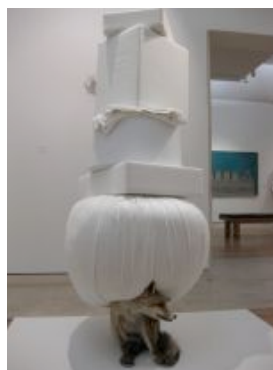
[\[enlarge\]](#)

Tracey Emin, 'There's a lot of money in chairs', Mixed, 1994. Photo: Anna Cady and Helen Martino.



[\[enlarge\]](#)

Damien Hirst and Debbie Lawson, 'Butterfly wallpaper by Damien Hirst as backdrop to Debbie Lawson's *Spider* 2008', mixed, 2008 /9. Photo: Anna Cady and Helen Martino.



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differ from Marc Quinn's marble portrait of Alison Lapper on the fourth plinth? Nobody mentioned craft in that context, so let's move on. We will disregard the title and view the work for what it is: exquisitely made, sensitive and often subversive work which becomes all the more accessible for the juxtaposing of one piece with another or with the setting / siting itself.

Questions relevant to the art and craft debate were more interestingly raised by artist Bouke de Vraes who is concerned with issues around imperfection and breakage which render a valuable craft object virtually worthless. In his reconstruction of ceramic pieces he assigns equal value to the original object, the shards themselves and to the spaces between (Guan Yin 2009 ).

Livia Martin continues this theme in 'Broken Things' (Obsidian Mirror – plaster with silk screen print), a serene modernist installation in the foyer referencing broken willow pattern plates, whereas Mona Hatoum's brilliantly coloured Murano glass grenades, (originally in the Querini Stampalia as a site specific installation. 2009 Venice Biennale) threaten to explode a showcase of 18<sup>th</sup> century Irish glass.

Taxidermy features in the work of many artists. Polly Morgan's 'Rest a Little in the Lap of Life' 2005, a small rodent, perfectly asleep in a champagne glass under a miniature chandelier is perfectly placed, masquerading as a bedside light beside a four-poster bed. And a macabre installation by Neil Hammon at the foot of the stairs (The City Lights Shone Brightly in their Eyes 2005) is well situated to disturb the complacent visitor.

There are many artists featured (too many to list!). There is film, light installation, photography, and ceramic. It is an exhibition to enjoy with young people, family and friends as there are so many issues raised within the choice of works and the presentation.

Suffice to say that despite some missed opportunities there is plenty to see in this exhibition which you will experience all the more intensely because of the challenge Artwise Curators were given and have attempted to resolve.

Also at Pallant House (to 6<sup>th</sup> March) is the moving installation Desconocida (Unknown) by Lise Bjørne Linnert (sewn name tags of missing women) and accompanying film *Senorita Extraviada* (Missing Young Women 2001) by Lourdes Portillo. It's worth the visit just for this.

Writer detail:

Visual artist and writer.

ALL PHOTOS ANNA CADY AND HELEN MARTINO

Venue detail:

[Pallant House Gallery](#) »

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Nina Saunders, 'Nina's Luggage, Katy's convoy', mixed, 2009. Photo: Anna Cady and Helen Martino.



[\[enlarge\]](#)  
Bouke de Vraes, 'Guan Yin', mixed, 2009. Photo: Anna Cady and Helen Martino.



[\[enlarge\]](#)  
Mona Hatoum, 'Grenade', glass, 2009. Photo: Anna Cady and Helen Martino.

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