

# Time Out

## London

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## Backdrop

★★★★★  
**Bloomberg East End**

Since Bloomberg is sponsoring the Dan Flavin exhibition, it makes perfect sense to mount a show in its own gallery of work inspired by Flavin. In comparison with Flavin's dazzling retrospective, though, everything here is likely to seem tame, derivative or prosaic. Using bog-standard fluorescent tubes, Flavin created work that is conceptually rigorous and visually poetic, that reveals its banal origins while transporting you somewhere over the rainbow. Leo Villareal achieves the opposite. 'Column' is a room lined with 51 tubes containing red, green and blue LEDs. A computer programme generates a sequence based on 'The Game of Life', created by mathematician John Conway, to produce rapidly shifting pulses and patterns. Mathematical sophistication and technical wizardry create an experience that, lacking the simplicity, intelligence or beauty of Flavin's work, adds up to very little.

The motto 'keep it simple, stupid' plays dividends. Inserting different-sized lights



'Candela 7 / 450 (For the Death Star)' (detail)

## Wall Drawings

★★★★★  
**Albion Elsewhere**

Lance Fung, curator of this show of wall drawings, has utilised the odd shape of the Albion gallery for good effect.

Reflected in muted silver on the opposite wall, areas of green, red, blue, magenta and navy transform the first, corridor-like space. White stripes create emphatic diamond shapes over the coloured panels.

Daniel Buren's name is synonymous with the 8.7m wide stripes with which he has covered acres of wall, since the late 1980s, to emphasise the relationship between artworks and their physical, cultural and economic surroundings. The fact that this piece is more decorative than earlier work suggests a more relaxed approach – less dogmatic and more playful.

While Buren alleviates the darkness of the low-ceilinged area, So Lewitt benefits from the high, well-lit space beyond. Inscribed on white walls with a black marker pen are two large drawings produced by assistants from the instructions written alongside their efforts. '1) Draw a line from the centre of the square halfway toward the upper left corner. 2) From the end of that line draw a line...'. A red circle seems to balance on the sparse black scaffolding of one drawing while, in the other, a red square looks poised to topple

bulbs into a branching tree of Y-shaped sockets, Mathieu Mercier creates a sculpture that humorously flaunts its mundane components. Erwin Redl draws in space using LEDs strung together in lines of light. Veiled by a triangle of white gauze, three lengths of white LEDs define a corner; if you stand back, diffused light transforms empty space into misty presence – as though a glass pyramid had lodged beneath the ceiling. Spencer Finch is a romantic. At 1.10pm on January 8 2003, he used a colorimeter to measure the colours found in shade above the snow blanketing Monet's garden at Giverny. Back in his New York studio, Finch matched the reading as nearly as possible by wrapping strips of gel round fluorescent tubes. The idea is wonderful; unfortunately the piece is so bright that it hurts the eyes and destroys the poetry of the idea.

'I'm fascinated by the everyday goodness of colour in the city,' says David Batchelor. 'We're surrounded by entirely new colours that are artificial, saturated, rich and impure – not the colours of nature. And it took artists a long time to catch up with this aspect of industrial society.' Cascading from the ceiling, his 'Candela' consists of 450 cleaning-fluid bottles bought from supermarkets. Suspended from electric cables and lit by energy bulbs, the plastic containers glow a cheery red, green, blue or yellow. Just as important are the six-and-a-half miles of white cable coiled round a pillar and piled on the floor beside a bank of white junction boxes and black adaptors. 'I like the mundanity of the materials,' says Batchelor who, like Flavin, transforms ordinary objects into magical installations. But while Flavin transports you elsewhere, Batchelor takes pleasure in the banal beauty of the here and now. Sarah Kent

from an adjacent line. The tension that lends humour to these elegant designs comes from the fact that, had the attempts to realise Lewitt's instructions been ham-fisted, the project would have failed dismally. Lewitt has been working in this way for decades, yet there's still something magical about the translation of dry instructions into supremely pleasing designs.

Robert Barry's work looks as if it is trying to escape through the back door. Write large in coloured tape, words such as 'waiting' (orange), 'any thing' (red), 'wonder' (green) and 'different' (purple) cover the glass doors and wall, and the partition screening the gallery. Some words seem to refer to their location. 'Anxious' is written upside-down and 'secret' wraps itself (secretively) round the end of a partition along with 'absurd' and 'nothing'. The significance of 'because' and 'without', on the other hand, is as ambiguous as their free-floating presence. Some are legible only from the outside, which emphasises the fact that the space was designed to be accessible from both the front and back, but the doors are kept firmly locked. The space is so awkward that most shows try to ignore it, but this installation actually thrives on the idiosyncrasies of Norman Foster's architecture. Sarah Kent

## Paula Kane



'Above the Waterfall'

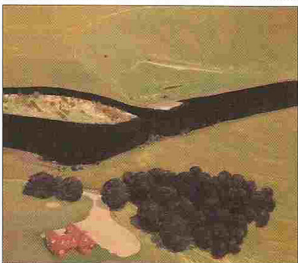
★★★★★  
**Emily Tsingou West End**

Appropriating landscape fragments from memory, art history, food packaging, Disney and more, Paula Kane combines them to create hybrid vistas. In her paintings, shafts of sunlight beam through cloudy skies, mountains loom in the distance, while rolling hills, rows of trees and rivers wind their way through the middle ground and brightly coloured flowers fill the foreground. As they're three-quarters classical landscape and one-quarter cartoon, the images shouldn't gel – perspectives are skewed and the sense of scale is odd – yet somehow they work. Sometimes the source material is stated, showing only a pale, creamy-yellow moon behind a stormy, purple, pink and green cloudy sky,

'Moon, after Turner' appears to be based on Turner's painting 'Fishermen at Sea'. In other paintings, the trees or the geographical formations seem familiar yet can't quite be placed; an implausibly jagged mountain range lit by a toxically bright yellow sun is reminiscent, for instance, of the white cliffs in Caspar David Friedrich's painting 'Chalk Cliffs on Rugen'.

In the absence of any signs of human or animal life, it's hard to imagine who or what might inhabit these strange places; for despite the cheery sunlight illuminating many of them, there are hints that not all is well. Surrounded by green water and bulrushes, the purple pond water of 'Pond V' is dotted with tiny blue and yellow daisy-like blooms, but ominous, lime-green algae also encroach round the edges. Helen Sampter

## Carol Rhodes



'Black River'

★★★★★  
**Andrew Mummy East End**

Carol Rhodes is the Morandi of muddy hinterlands. Her brush loaded with clay-coloured paint, she uses measured, undulating strokes to describe fields or shorelines that, although viewed from on high, have the quiet intensity of still lifes. When greeted by areas of scratched or scumbled pigment, these zones appear vulnerable to time and tide, and human presence, as inferred by buildings or factories, seems similarly precarious. Apart from a view of a dis-

concertingly immaculate town centre, in these paintings Rhodes concentrates on estuaries and riverbanks, where the balance between man and nature appears especially fragile.

In 'Black Water', a bungalow has been built, for instance, far too close to the river; rising above the ribbon of dark water, a smooth escarpment speaks ominously of potential peril. The shacks in 'Flood Plain and Shelf' are dwarfed by their surroundings – defiant but, perhaps, doomed.

Informed in part by our knowledge of recent climatic disasters, a sober, psychologically charged atmosphere takes the work far beyond, say, Wayne Thiebaud's delicious aerial views of the Sacramento Delta or Richard Diebenkorn's 'Ocean Park' series, both of which spring to mind. Rhodes' calm exactitude is really a foil. Just as her paint makes the journey from earth to pigment – and to a description of earth – so these small, well-behaved paintings speak of our inevitable return to the soil. Martin Coomer