

# acme PROJECT SPACE

Recipient Acme Jessica Wilkes Award 2008-09

## Howard Dyke

Dance of the Techno Polar Bear

05.06.09 – 28.06.09

44 Bonner Road,  
London, E2 9JS

Thursday to Sunday  
12pm - 6pm  
**Private view**  
4 June 6pm

**Acme Project Space is delighted to present an extensive exhibition of new paintings by Howard Dyke. Below Stephanie Moran describes Howard's work:**

'Dance of the Techno Polar Bear' combines process painting and Expressionism via a Pop sensibility, re-evaluating 80s Neo-Expressionism. How does it do all that, you may ask? Well...

Dyke begins with the image of the Burka or hijab-clad figure and expands the symbology; relating to the Madonna of Western art, dressed in a veil of our times, she presents a conflicted image, ubiquitous in the press and cosmopolitan cities. She is a celebrity and also, paradoxically, anonymous.

Dyke sees the paintings' real subject as constructions hidden by or revealed beneath drapery. In luscious colour, the physicality of the paint drips over an image-structure which acts as a 'scaffold' or rationale for the paint. The paint, like the veil, conceals and reveals; it becomes the fetishistic veil. Dyke moves towards transcending the subject, allowing spontaneity and chance to work through the process and the framework.

**How to negotiate expression in an era of mediated emotion and alienation?**

"Never be afraid to cough up a bit of diseased lung for the spectators... How are people ever going to help themselves if they can't grab onto a fragment of your own horror?..."<sup>1</sup> Gesture takes

the place of a literal narrative. Dyke meditates on the Burka - an idea of repression, of subjection - the figure, the facial expression; perhaps expression enabled through restriction. Gestural marks are contained by a rigorous framework and disciplined approach, however there is a move away from the restraint of the clothing, a desire to escape.

The imagery transforms. Veiled women become mountains or airplanes or even 50s sci-fi figures in spacesuits. Textures change from soft fabric to hard reflective surfaces, then become dripping



*Cultural Power Dresser 2009 (detail)*



Natascha 2009 (detail of work in progress)

paint again. There is a discernible cartoonishness. The titles knowingly blend cultural references: Guston's Klansmen, religious painting, as well as celebrity stardom are present in 'Ikkkon'; Nigella Lawson meets Rauschenberg, de Kooning and 70s feminism in 'Domestic Goddess Combine Painting'.

The most recent work, which emerges out of the veiled women paintings, achieves disruption of the support having reached a point of collapse, dissolving or transcending of the image/structure. The actual support, the fabric ground, takes the place of the image and diversifies as Dyke uses various patterned fabrics. The marks become more diffuse, responding to the ground. It seems as though the point of view has become so close up the figure cannot be seen. The figure is the paint, the gesture; the veil is absorbed and internalised. Panels are montaged together to create new relationships and junctures, thresholds and joinings, opening up the paintings and forming dialectics between them.

This overview of the past year hangs across two rooms which mark a transition, diversifying or zooming in, as the focus of Dyke's painting moves from clothing to fabric, image-structure to a fascination with the seams.

### Stephanie Moran 2009

1. Douglas Coupland, *Generation X: Tales for an Accelerated Culture*, 1991

## acme project space

The **Acme Project Space** is a new multi-purpose venue located at our major studio site, Robinson Road, in Bethnal Green, E2. For the last 20 years the building has been the home of The Showroom which has now relocated to new gallery premises in Penfold Street, NW8. The new project space will support various activities including our expanding **Residency, Awards & Community Programme** and our major **International Residencies Programme**, through exhibitions, presentations, seminars and events.

### Acme Jessica Wilkes Award 2008-2009

Howard Dyke is the first recipient of the annual Jessica Wilkes Award, the result of a legacy from the artist Jessica Wilkes which provides an Acme tenant with a free studio for a year and a grant (together worth £10,000). This exhibition includes work made both during the last year and specifically for the space.

The Jessica Wilkes Award is one strand of our Residency, Awards & Community Programme which supports the development of artists' careers through the provision of free-space and financial and practical support.

Acme Studios, established in 1972, is a London-based charity that supports fine art practice by providing artists with affordable studios and living space. It is the leading development agency for artists' studios in England.

For more information about Acme's work, please contact:

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