



**BRISTOL – Andrew Mania, Brendan Lancaster, Martyn Cross**

9 June – 28 July 2017

Thursday to Saturday 12–6 pm and by appointment

Opening reception 9 June 2017 6–9pm

'BRISTOL', Peter von Kant's latest exhibition, brings together three very different artists. Though Martyn Cross, Brendan Lancaster and Andrew Mania are all based in the city none feel a part of its art scene despite finding it conducive to making and showing work. Each relate more to the position of an outsider, the position of being detached from, rather than at the centre of, the action. In fact, aside from the fact of their coming from and/or living in Bristol now, this condition of remove is Cross, Lancaster and Mania's strongest point of connection.

Eccentric characters populate Cross's works. They are represented only indirectly, however, through particular accoutrements – a bag, a hat, a walking stick. Cross wanders the city in the manner of a twentieth century flaneur looking for people, places, and items of the everyday. These he examines from the imagined perspective of a person from the future, teasing out their strangeness by subtracting the human whilst at the same time managing to infuse the absent figures with absolute warmth and respect. Plastic bags, ironed, painted and fashioned into objects, for example, have made intermittent appearances in Cross's work for a while. At times these are formed into small rugs like magic carpets, at others, brightly painted items of clothing – a bright red cap. They are like items of lost property, estranged from the people to whom they once belonged. In one instance a set of red and white striped shopping bags hang awkwardly against the wall. This claustrophobic series, hung one inside another, are ironed stiff and so shrunken. On one is a painted head, the decapitation more than a nod to Caravaggio's depiction of Holofernes's beheading. Once bagged, the severance of head from body becomes darkly humorous – capitalised, you might say.

Lancaster's oil paintings, are similarly emptied of bodies yet, as settings, abstracted into brushed lines and fields of colour, they constantly allude to the presence of a human. Lancaster's points of departure are viewpoints of city streets, convoluted sight lines through window frames and muted, brooding domestic interiors. Not that you'd know it – his paintings are always so heavily distilled that a staircase becomes a diagonal line, a hill a complicated series of vertices forming a cage-like mound. The resulting compositions are awkward: colour tones that are too similar touch; compositions are lopsided; small works are over-crowded with a tangle of gestures. Brush marks are smeared and blurred; constant correction, wiping away, and over painting causes his palette to become muddied and impure. The sense of things being a little off lurks everywhere, in Lancaster's paintings, below the surface. This is in part due to their unresolved, inconstant, hybridity which wavers between a simplicity characteristic of Vanessa Bell and a confusion of angles and forms beloved by Édouard Vuillard.

No such instability courts Andrew Mania's drawn portraits on wood. His poppy effusions of care-free colour and pattern, on the surface at least, appear in diametric opposition to Lancaster's slow, reflective and understated works. The simple handling of Mania's portraits reflects the spontaneous impulsiveness of the youths they portray; idealised males are pictured expectant. They look moodily into the middle distance, gaze back at us alluringly or watch themselves admiringly in mirrors or phones. Fresh-faced and pink-lipped they exude an unmistakable air of overdone sensuality and sexuality. There's a deliberate amateur naivety to all this; it smacks of the love-sick teenager obsessively archiving his latest crushes. But the innocence of this compulsion is countered and complicated in two ways. Sometimes Mania's work makes explicit references to classic compositions drawn from art history – Édouard Manet's *Olympia* (1863) or Henri Matisse's *Dance* (1910), for example. At others he allows backgrounds of semi-geometric decorative pattern or sketched scrawls to encroach on the figures themselves – in one instance, blue and white diagonal pattern replacing hair. Though rooted in the contemporary moment, Mania's choice of subject matter actually has its origins in a long tradition in art and criticism of admiration for the young male figure, from classical Greek statuary to Victorian aesthetes like Walter Pater.

So what do you make of an exhibition such as 'BRISTOL' that plucks the work of three artists whose works are stylistically so dissimilar, whose thematic interests only just overlap, whose interests in classical cannon's of Art History becomes apparent only after a time but whose works nevertheless hang here together, side by side? The lack of visual kinship in 'BRISTOL' is founded on difference as opposed to similarity (or is it homogeneity?). Its turn from internal coherence toward a celebration of variance is unusually restorative.

Lizzie Lloyd, 2017

For all further information please contact the gallery

Andrew Mania (b. 1974, Bristol, works/lives Bristol) has participated in prestigious exhibitions internationally since leaving Chelsea College of Art in 1999. Selected solo shows include Chisenhale Gallery, London; Bloomberg Space, London; Vilma Gold, London; Jack Hanley Gallery, San Francisco; John Connely Presents, New York; Galerie Valentin, Paris; Group shows include, Museum of Modern Art, Oxford; Turner Contemporary, Margate; Yvon Lambert, New York; Jerwood Space, London; Spike Island, Bristol; New Contemporaries, Milton Keynes Gallery. Mania's work sits in eminent public and private collections such as the Victoria and Albert Museum, London, Bristol City Museum, Elton John, Mario Testino.

Brendan Lancaster (b. 1968, Hartlepool, works/lives Bristol) took an Honours Degree in Mathematics at Oriol College Oxford and an MA in 'Modernity and Representation' at London Metropolitan before embarking on painting. More recently his work has been included in the John Moores Painting Prize, Liverpool (2012) and the Exeter Contemporary Open (2012 and 2016). Upcoming shows include Plymouth Contemporary Open (2017); 'Which way up' Ruskin Mill, Bristol (2017); 'BRISTOL', a three person show at Peter von Kant, London (2017).

Martyn Cross (b.1975) lives and works in Bristol. He graduated from Bath Spa University in 1998 with a degree in Fine Art. Recent and selected exhibitions include Plymouth Contemporary,

Peninsula Arts/KARST, Plymouth (2017); BRISTOL, Peter von Kant, London (2017); Oriol Davies Painting Open, Oriol Davies Gallery, Newtown, Wales (2016); I like it and so I do it, Ocean Studios, Plymouth (2016); Under the Volcano, Artworks Project Space, London (2015); Sweat Lodge, Spike Island, Bristol (2014); Take Me To The Other Side, Pallas Project, Dublin (2013); Like A Monkey With A Miniature Cymbal, Aid & Abet, Cambridge (2013); Temporary Residence, Kettles Yard, Cambridge (2011); Jerwood Drawing Prize, London and UK tour (2009); Exeter Contemporary Open, Exeter Phoenix (2009); These Living Walls of Jet, Ceri Hand Gallery, Liverpool (2008).

Based in Bristol, Lizzie Lloyd is a writer, translator, and associate lecturer at University of the West of England. She has contributed to Art Monthly, Artnet, Art Review, Journal of Contemporary Painting among other art magazines and journals. Her writing is included in multiple exhibition catalogues appearing alongside shows in Exeter Phoenix, Hestercombe Gallery, UH Gallery, and Bridport Museum among others. Lloyd's work has exhibited and/or performed as part of Plymouth Art Weekender, Autocatalytic Future Games (No Format gallery, London), HOUSEWORK (Safehouse 1, London) and Arnolfini Gallery. She was recently writer-in-residence at Arnolfini Gallery and is currently writer-in-residence in Plymouth. Her doctoral thesis on art writing and subjectivity at University of Bristol is due to be completed in 2018.