

DAILY MAGAZINE BLOG ON WITH NEWS, VIEWS, REVIEWS, DIARIES, EVENTS, VIDEO & PHOTO-JOURNALS

[back to Your Gallery blog home](#)

SIMON ENGLISH AT FRED, LONDON



Simon English in his studio photographed by Dafydd Jones

When I visited Simon English in his Hackney studio a few weeks before the opening of his two current exhibitions at FRED in London and Leipzig, English was still in the throes of finishing several works, 'editing' them and making final additions to them. Three large-scale sheets of thick, textured paper tinged a pale pink - hence the title of the exhibition 'Banks Cream', the name given to the now defunct paper English uses - were pinned to the walls, each connected through the repetition of certain motifs, references and an underlying diaristic narrative stemming from English's life over the last few years. Onto one of the sheets of paper - each 2.5 x 2.5 metres - English had that week painted a huge green horse to the alarm of his dealer Fred Mann who was at English's studio the day before me. It may have been a free, childlike rendition but in many ways it sums up English's practice and gives a clue to his aesthetic and methodology.

I first encountered the work of Simon English in the early 1990s at an exhibition in the Brixton apartment of Laurent Delaye who was then dealing from home. Each work in the exhibition consisted of a series of panels - primrose yellow and egg yolk orange panels sandwiched panels in which exquisitely painted figures cruised along roads shadowing into the distance. What was so immediately unusual about this series of sequenced, composite paintings was the fluency of the *drawing* and the sense that English was boldly working against the grain of artistic fashions at the time.

SHOWDOWN

ARTWORKS GO
HEAD-TO-
HEAD FOR
VISITORS'
VOTES...

NOW OPEN

CRITS

PRESENT
YOUR WORK
FOR
COMMENTS
BY OTHER
ARTISTS

NOW OPEN

STREET ART

PHOTOS &
VIDEOS OF
GRAFFITI,
MURALS,
PERFORM-
-ANCE,
FOUND
WORKS...

MUSEUMS
AROUND
THE WORLD
COLLECTION

English said recently that he felt his work lay 'somewhere between painting and drawing' and that at some deep level he'd always had 'a fear of paint'. In his more recent work - mixed media works on paper - one senses the liberation English is enjoying having abandoned the restrictions of canvas and paint. His newer works combine drawing, painting and pieces of text which arrive onto the paper through a non-premeditated process. The scale of the works and the decision to use various mediums within one work gives English a free creative reign to record thoughts, cultural and historical references, people one might recognise (I spotted the London dealer Maureen Paley), friends, lovers, the details of a rendez-vous scribbled down after a phone call, a line from a poem - all of which accumulatively amount to a visual imprint of English's subconscious.

Whilst English's range of references are repeated and returned to - childrens' books by C S Lewis and Arthur Rackham, jockeys and horse-racing (his father was a jockey), gay sexual fantasies, Edward Muybridge, Raymond Pettibon, Robert Rauschenberg, Luc Tuymans - there is a spontaneity to the works as if they are the representations of a flood of associations from a particular moment. And yet simultaneously, that sense of the record of a particular moment gives way to a condensation of time, of all moments merging into one. Through the prism of English's subconscious and creative process, influences and points of reference, many of them extremely time-specific, converge and exist at the same time, the same moment. As T S Eliot writes in 'Burnt Norton',

'Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.'

The sentiment conveyed here by Eliot, a figure English refers to, echoes throughout these works. The whimsical tone present in some of the drawings is tempered by a tangible sense of loss and sadness, the emotional glue that binds the drawings and connects them sequentially into such a hugely impressive and moving body of work.

Rebecca Wilson

Simon English: Banks Cream and The Somerset Owls
Until 19 November
Fred
45 Vyner Street
London E2 9DQ
Tel: +44 0208 981 2987
www.fred-london.com

AND

Fred
4B Spinnerei Strasse
Leipziger Baumwollspinnerei
Gebäude B4
04179 Leipzig
Germany

Simon English, *Love*, 2006



EXHIBITIONS,
ETC ...

ART
COLLEGES
AROUND
THE WORLD
UNIVERSITIES
VISUAL ART
& DESIGN
SCHOOLS
ETC...

ART
DEALERS &
GALLERIES
AROUND
THE WORLD
PROFILES,
PROGRAM
ETC...

YOUR
GALLERY...
WHERE ALL
ARTISTS
CAN SHOW
THEIR WORK
ONLINE+
VIDEO ART

YOUR
GALLERY...
CHAT LIVE
TO OTHER
PEOPLE WHO
LIKE ART

YOUR
GALLERY...
FORUM
FOR
DEBATES
ON ART
ONLINE

YOUR
GALLERY...
READER
REVIEWS...
SHOWS YOU
LIKE -
OR DON'T

YOUR
GALLERY...

Simon English, *Only the Good Die Young*, 2006



SEND AN
ESSAY...
READ
OTHERS

**YOUR
GALLERY...**
MEET
OTHER
PEOPLE WHO
LIKE ART

Simon English, *Love Comes to an End*, 2006



Posted by editorial on October 24, 2006 05:05 AM | [Add a Comment](#)

[↑ back to top](#)

THE SAATCHI GALLERY

Copyright 2003-2006 © The Saatchi Gallery : London Contemporary Art Gallery : [Site map](#)

[Terms & Conditions](#)

