

1967, reads as a series of reflexive propositions on authorship and autonomy, perception and reality and a past that might speak to us not as a reified moment but as a vital means of illuminating the here and now. Gillick's *The Lights Are No Nearer*, 2006, is a series of circular vinyl stickers affixed to the windows of the galleries which recounts the adaptive responses of workers to the closure of a factory. The piece extends from his *Construcción de Uno*, 2004, and provides intimations of change and moving on as both individuals and a collective. I expected nearly as much before I arrived, but found there something more supple, poetically discursive and compellingly open in its intricate layers and treatments of time, perception and modes or models of production than I would have imagined to be cast by the flickering shadow of candlelight. ■

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■ Christine Borland

Fruitmarket Gallery Edinburgh

December 2 to January 28

The trace of a human spine made with dust, bronze heads cast from unidentified human skulls and jam-making: these are all featured in Christine Borland's 'Preserves', a show that demonstrates the artist's consistent exploration of the human body since the early 1990s. Even in new work, in which the artist appears to turn her attention to the natural world and influential figures of western science and medicine, the questions of what lies at the periphery of institutional knowledge and power are never far away.

This is particularly evident in Fruitmarket's ground-floor gallery, where Borland's object-orientated works, such as *Blanket Used on Police Firing Range, Berlin: Repaired*, 1993, are shown alongside installations such as

Cet être-là, c'est à toi de le créer! Vous devez la créer! (This is a being you must create), 1997. Viewers are first drawn into the show by the dramatically spot-lit *Bullet Proof Breath*, 2001, a sculpture of the bronchia of a human lung made of glass and spider silk. Protected by a Plexiglas vitrine, and displayed on a pedestal, *Bullet Proof Breath* plays with notions of fragility, preserving simultaneously the labour of a spider along with the breath of the glass-blower. The exhibition leaflet explains the spider silk's significance – the US military interest in its potential as bullet-proof material – but the theme of the bullet, real or suggested, recurs in other works such as *Shoes with .38mm Hole*, 1993. A pair of size five black ladies' shoes, with the hole in the right foot, have a strange sexual ambiguity, not least because these flat pointed lace-ups are spot-lit, which heightens their fetishistic quality. Placed on the floor, the shoes almost cue the viewer to step into the shoes of an absent 'other' – one that has shot themselves in the foot.

In contrast, the installation *Second Class Male, Second Class Female*, 1996, takes viewers through the production of two bronze heads, the final outcome for what turns out to be an investigative process. On one side of the installation, the bronzes are displayed with their respective plaster heads and moulds alongside police forensic methods used to determine age, race, gender from skeletal remains. On the other side the original skulls, complete with packaging, are shown alongside an exchange of letters between artist and supplier. These reveal that the skulls were the remains of 'natural' stock obtained before a ban 'enforced by the Indian government after an investigation into the sources of their supplies'. Borland leaves the viewer to read between the lines. The strength of this installation is how viewers are taken through the process of identity reconstruction of two unknown Asian people: the resulting honorific bronze busts are therefore intrinsically linked to the global trade of body parts.

'Preserves' is at its darkest here, reinforcing the sense that the works on the ground floor are, overall, dark in tone. The upstairs gallery of the more recent works, from

Christine Borland
Support Work:
Hippocrates 1:075
2006



2002 to 2006, on first impression, appears conceptually lightweight. This is, in part, due to the visual reference being no longer the human body, but plants and trees. On the surrounding walls, *The History of Plants According to Women, Children and Students, 2002-2006*, consists of 100 etchings of plants. Ten plant types have been selected and then coloured by hand, so what appear to be uniform copies of plants are in fact full of variations. The accompanying text reveals important details: the source for the imagery is from *Significant Notes of the History of Plants* by Leonard Fuchs, 1542, taken from a copy of a book owned by Rev Mark Jameson, Glasgow University. *Support Work: Hippocrates 1:075, 2006*, described as a scale replica of the structure supporting the ancient tree (under which Hippocrates is believed to have taught medicine), dominates the gallery space. *Preserves (2nd Batch), 2006*, is a collection of jam jars, full of apple jelly made by the artist from Isaac Newton's apple tree.

As 'Preserves' suggests, Borland's practice is concerned with preservation on a number of levels: the apple jelly is the other, more playful, side of the decomposing *Apples with Holes, 1991-2006*, downstairs. The preoccupation with art process and the labour of others (so explicit in *Second Class Male, Second Class Female*) continues to resonate in *The History of Plants According to Women, Children and Students*, making visually manifest unnamed, historical others – in this case the women and girls who would have painted the original prints. The artist names their contemporary counterparts in her re-enactment of the work and its 'production line'. *Preserves (2nd Batch)* may

be from Newton's tree, and all the associations that go with it – but the joke is also how jam-making is thought to be the 'preserve' of women.

In Borland's work, the impulse to preserve has consistently been directed to the traces of unidentified others caught, for whatever reasons, in the cracks of medical institutions and their archives. 'Preserves' also stages the artist's need to find metonymic ways to investigate the historical, medical and scientific discourses that surround the body. This suggests we may see more oblique approaches from Borland in future work, and how the viewer will be taken through that art process will be a compelling question. ■

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