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- Books (4) Chat (3) Classical (14) Comedy (2) Dance (11) Festivals (4) Film (5) International (10) Links (7) Museums (7) National (15) Opera (3) Photography (6) Pop and rock (14) Reviews (25) Theatre (65) Visual arts (79)

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GUEST BLOG: The Open Eye Gallery's Liverpool Biennial exhibitions

By Laura Davis on Sep 14, 12 04:47 PM in Visual arts

HERE'S a guest blog from Alex Horne, who has also been visiting the Liverpool Biennial today. He has chosen to focus on the Open Eye Gallery's exhibitions, which consider ideas of desire.

In unison with the rest of the Liverpool artistic community the Open Eye Gallery has blossomed spectacularly for the Biennial, inviting the hundreds of thousands of expected visitors to experience photography in innovative and challenging ways.



Sinta Tantra's site specific work Together Yet Forever Apart

As the gallery approaches the year anniversary of its move to the stunning environs of the Waterfront the gallery's facade has been redecorated by award winning artist Sinta Tantra.

Her work on the outer wall of the gallery dissolves the boundaries of the building through a kaleidoscopic mosaic of colours which expose the interior of the gallery to outsiders and impose a variety of coloured shadows on the inside of the space.

Taking inspiration from the power of architecture Tantra's piece is a playful but forceful examination of the power of colour and how we interact with buildings.

Inside the gallery the first floor is dedicated to two pieces by controversial Japanese photographer Kohei Yoshiyuki. Both analyse the act voyeurism and in the process question the distinction between our public and private lives.

Greeting visitors on arrival is 'Love Hotel', an alluring but somewhat troubling piece which features stills from sex tapes filmed at one of Tokyo's infamous book-by-the-hour hotels.

Due to the contradictory pairing of intimate moments on a bank of television screens the compilation of images at once invite and repel, testing the audiences willingness to be complicit in the act of voyeurism.

The second work takes this challenge even further. 'The Park' is an interactive piece in which viewers, armed with a torch, enter into a dark room. The walls of the space are covered in prints of photographs Yoshiyuki took when he ingratiated himself with the Peeping Tom community of Chou Park and engaged in the 'illicit games of cat and mouse' these people participated in with the adventurous outdoor lovers of the area.

In entering the space the participant expands beyond the role of passive viewer and, like Yoshiyuki did, become part of this seedy underworld; in a way the torch bearer becomes the unexpected guest of the Biennial's theme.

On the floor above is an exhibition of prints by American artist Mark Morrisroe and features the last body of work he produced before his death from an AIDS related illness in 1989. In a sense in viewing this collection the viewer is participating in a different aspect of voyeurism as they peruse the last pieces of art the man made, some of which were created in a makeshift darkroom in the hospital he died in.



Morrisroe Mark, Untitled c.1987. Courtesy of: The estate of Mark Morrisroe (Ringier Collection) at Fotomuseum Winterthur

The prints display many characteristics of the punk movement Morrisroe was so heavily involved in. The x-ray images of pill bottles, magazine clippings and the artist's own body converge in a cacophony of colour and raw emotion exposing to UK and runs from September 14th to November 26th.

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