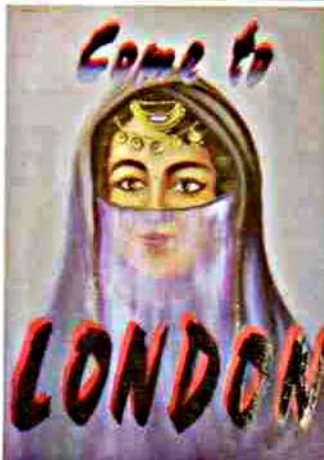


Royale with Cheese



Simon Bedwell, 'Come to London', 2006

★★★★★

Alicon Mayfair to Sloane Square

A Royale with cheese, as anyone who's seen the film 'Pulp Fiction' knows, is the French name for a McDonald's quarter pounder with cheese. In the case of this group show, with its mix of Western artists and selections from the gallery's Asian stable, the borrowed name serves as a metaphor for ideas of translation, cross-cultural influence and semiotic shift – most of the works focusing, appropriately enough, on various pop-

cultural artefacts or formats. So, there's Simon Bedwell's ironically re-sloganned found posters, panels by graphic novelist Samath Banerjee about Che Guevara's misguided African adventure and Shezad Dawood's diptych with the word 'motherfucker' scrawled across it in Urdu graffiti.

So far, so entertaining. The problems start when trying to shoehorn in more sombre work. Debnath Basu's text collages and the late Sadequain's calligraphic paintings, are both still concerned with translation, but in a much more formal sense, their works so inward-looking and personal as to seem rather lost amid the surrounding buzz.

Instead, the two most successful pieces strike a balance between personal identity and mass-media consciousness. Coincidentally, both use invented characters: the grotesque 'Dancing Othello' of Ashish Avikunthak's film, with his hysterical masquerade of Hindi and Western roles, and, occupying the entire basement, the fullest presentation yet of David Blandy's ongoing 'Barefoot Lone Pilgrim' creation. Mixing together kung-fu and soul music in films, posters, comics, arcade games, LP covers and even commemorative action figures, Blandy's project offers a cogent comment on the way in which the desire for cultural authenticity can be translated and repackaged into mere merchandising. *Gabriel Coxhead*

In the studio Ben Rivers



Ben Rivers's atmospheric short films fuse fiction and ethnographic-style documentary to convey ideas about landscape and man's place within it. His film, 'Origin of the Species', showing within a specially constructed hut, follows an elderly man, 'S', who lives in a ramshackle house in the Scottish highlands and goes about his business while pondering evolution and the meaning of life.

Why make a film with someone like 'S'?

'I'm interested in the idea that there can be both an ecstasy and a madness to living in the wilderness. People like "S" don't avoid society – they are happy when people visit – but the desire to be in their world is stronger. "S" is also into Darwin so I wanted him to talk about evolution, but through his own mirror.'

How do you construct a film using mainly documentary footage?

'My films really come together in the editing. I didn't script anything "S" says but I knew what I wanted to pull out from the hours of phone conversations we had. In a way my films use reality to convey something else and I like it that there are questions about what it is you're watching.'

I'm intrigued by the swirling cosmos that appears at the beginning of the film. That's not documentary...

'No, that was actually four hours spent filming sunlight hitting a greasy pan of burnt tomato sauce from the previous night's dinner and some porridge.' *Interview and portrait: Helen Sumpter. Ben Rivers shows at Kate MacGarry until May 2 (see Bethnal Green to Hackney).*



Exhibitions

How to use the listings

★ Denotes an exhibition or event we particularly recommend.
FREE All venues and exhibitions are free unless otherwise indicated.
NEW Denotes a new opening.
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► Before a date denotes a closing date; after a date denotes a starting date.

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Major spaces & institutions

Barbican Centre

0845 120 7550. Silk St, EC2Y 8DS.

Barbican. Main gallery 11am-8pm Mon, Fri, Sat, Sun; until 6pm Tue and Wed; until 10pm Thur. The Curve 11am-8pm daily.

★ **Céleste Boursier-Mougnot** Fine art doesn't often achieve the coveted status of 'viral sensation'. But then, not many exhibitions feature zebra finches rocking out on electric guitar. At the time of writing, Céleste Boursier-Mougnot has clocked up almost 600,000 hits for his clip of 40 zebra finches exploring an aviary furnished with amplified guitars and cymbals, 'playing' them as they do so. But while the video presents the installation as a perhaps gimmicky Woodstock for twitchers, the immersive live event is a more meditative experience which rewards patience. (EL) ► May 23.

★ **Ron Arad: Restless** £10; £8 concs; online discounts. From the Duchampian 'Rover Chair' with which he made his name, Ron Arad has ceaselessly pushed the potential of objects, so much so that his abiding obsession with the humble chair becomes something of a running gag. In short films that act in lieu of gallery texts, Arad's openness and humour shine while the art versus design arguments recede. He has also made excellent use of the Barbican's rather awkward exhibition spaces, which makes him less of a designer and more of a miracle worker. (MC) ► May 16.

British Museum

020 7323 8181. 44 Great Russell St, WC1B 3DG. Holborn/Russell Sq. 10am-5.30pm Sat-Wed, 10am-8.30pm (selected galleries only) Thur & Fri. **World class permanent collection** of art and artefacts from ancient and living cultures.

★ **Kingdom of Ife: Sculptures from West Africa** £8, concs available. 020 7323 8181. ► Jun 6. See *Exhibition of the week*. **Revolution on Paper: Mexican Prints 1910-1960** This Tardis of an exhibition, charting the rise of Hispanic printmaking practices out of the burning belly of the Mexican revolution, lacks the heat expected of its incendiary topic. Persevere, though, for this is a significant selection of printed works and published matter by internationally recognised painters such as Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco, as well as lesser-known local artists and illustrators, that leaves one in no doubt as to the harsh reality of life in Mexico in the first half of the twentieth century. (RG) ► Apr 5.

Courtauld Gallery

020 7848 2526. Somerset House, Strand, WC2R 0RN. Charing Cross. 10am-6pm daily, last admission 5.30pm; £5, £4 concs; under-18s, full time UK students and UK university staff, unwaived free; Mon (except bank holidays and special exhibitions) 10am-2pm free to all.

★ **Michelangelo's Dream** Despite being intimate gifts, Michelangelo's 'presentation' drawings to Tommaso de' Cavalieri have led a very public existence. Cavalieri, a young man with whom the much older artist fell passionately in love with, and for whom many of the drawings and poems on display here were made, was generous with these marvellous gifts from the divine Michelangelo, making them readily available to craftsmen to copy. At the centre of the display is 'Il Sogno', The Dream. Unlike the 'presentation' drawings, which illustrate episodes from antique myth, the Dream is an allegorical image, full of ambiguity, which appears to illustrate the awakening of virtue. Rich and strange, in truth it escapes a definitive reading, though as testimony to Michelangelo's staggering virtuosity and complex intellect it is invaluable. (FG) ► May 16.

Dulwich Picture Gallery

020 8693 5254. 7 Gallery Rd, SE21 7AD. West Dulwich rail. 10am-5pm Tue-Fri, 11am-5pm Sat, Sun & bank holiday Mon; Entry to permanent collection and exhibition £9; £8 seniors; children free. England's oldest public art gallery's **permanent collection** includes fine paintings by Gainsborough, Murillo and Van Dyck.

★ **Paul Nash** The first room is a knockout – there are strange views showing the ceiling as sky, the walls as forest and the floor as sea – visions Nash based on seeing disjointed landscapes reflected behind him in a mirror. An unassuming British surrealist, Nash was one of our greatest landscape painters. This exhibition pits him needlessly against the theme of 'The Elements', whether of fire, water etc, or of pictorial elements, either in harmony or else in conflict. Elemental though his work surely is, trying to squeeze such open, intense and dreamlike output into a narrow theoretical framework is overcooking of the highest order. (OW) ► May 9.

Estorick Collection

020 7704 9522. 39a Canonbury Square, N1 2AN. Highbury & Islington. 11am-6pm Wed-Sat, until 8pm Thur, 12noon-5pm Sun; £5; £3.50 concs; under-16s, NUS free.

On the Move: Visualising Action The representation and analysis of movement in the visual arts and science, with paintings and drawings by Futurists including Balla and Boccioni, photographs by Eadweard Muybridge and others, contemporary work by Idris Khan and scientific objects including a zoetrope. Curated by Jonathan Miller. ► Apr 18.

ICA

020 7930 3647. The Mall, SW1Y 5AH. Charing Cross. 12noon-7pm daily, until 9pm Thur.

★ **Billy Childish** 'Unknowable but Certain', recent paintings and a display relating to Childish's output as a musician and writer. ► Apr 18.

National Gallery

020 7747 2885. Trafalgar Square, WC2N 5DN. Charing Cross. 10am-6pm daily, until 9pm Fri. One of the world's finest **permanent collections** of western European paintings including all the greats – Piero della Francesca, Raphael, Titian, Rembrandt, Velázquez – plus the Impressionists and Post-Impressionists.

★ **Christen Købke: Danish Master of Light** Landscape, portrait and topographical paintings by a little-known nineteenth-century Danish artist. ► Jun 13. **Painting History: Delacroix and Lady Jane Grey** £8; £7 seniors, concs (£4 after 2.30pm Tue); £4 students, job seekers.