

Intimate Wine Reception

Château Shatto, Los Angeles 19 March – 8 May

If you could invite anyone, living or dead, to a drinks party, who would you choose? This seems to be what Melissa Sachs and Cameron Soren (artist duo Body by Body) asked themselves before choosing the artists, and other less easily defined entities, for their curatorial project *Intimate Wine Reception*. The result is a potted alternative history of contemporary art that focuses on forgotten artists, fictitious artists and galleries, and collaboration without consent. It begins with three works from British artist group BANK's series of *Fax-backs* (1999), in which they graded the press releases of galleries as though they were homework assignments and then faxed them back with snarky corrections. Here these works become companion pieces to an installation from the wholly fictitious Head Gallery – a more recent venture by BANK cofounder John Russell, although he has denied his involvement – consisting of a mound of rubble and two headless mannequins reading Mo-Leeza Roberts's *Head* (2015), a satirical novel about a postapocalyptic artworld hardly changed from today's. The book is an actual publication, but the author is invented, as is the Jerry Saltz review on its back cover, which is dated 28 January 2007 and begins, 'A SUBTLE exhibition – inflected with bourgeois nostalgia and EUROZONE criticality.' Russell's interest in lampooning the artworld in texts, and hoaxing it through the production of books, websites and installations that reference imaginary spaces and artists,

is mirrored in Triple Candie's presentation of the work of the Harrogate Seven: a make-believe collective of British grandmothers producing wallpaper designs from photocollages. Again the spoof seeks to authenticate itself through the publication of misleading texts, such as a label claiming that 'Jonathan Jones, *The Guardian's* art critic, has anointed them the modern-day heirs to William Morris.' All of these contributions, spanning 17 years, mime much of the nonsense that continues to be written about art.

Triple Candie, whose cofounders, Shelly Bancroft and Peter Nesbitt, insist they're not artists but an 'independent curatorial agency', has in the past organised shows of real artists without those artists' permission, such as a 2006 David Hammons retrospective using only photocopies of images of his work, and in this tradition Sachs and Soren have included in their exhibition photocopies of pictures of public sculptures that appear in a David Ireland (1930–2009) monograph. BANK's facsimiles of press releases are another form of unauthorised collaboration, but rather than appropriations of photo documentation, they are appropriations of exhibition texts. Georgina Starr's *There's Something Going On in the Sculpture Studio* (1995) is yet another form of unauthorised collaboration, in which she secretly films Georg Herold visiting her studio to discuss the possibility of working together.

The final pieces of this exhibition-puzzle are works by three slightly lesser known artists. Jacqueline De Jong was a member of the Situationist International during the 1960s and now grows potatoes in the French countryside, casting them as ceramic *Baked Potatoes* (2006), of which 35 hang from the ceiling, or as 18-carat gold *Pommes de Jong* (2008–11). Bruno Pelassy (1966–2002), who died only ten years into his artistic career, has two films on show. Irving Norman (1906–89), who trained as a barber, fought in the Spanish Civil War and afterwards became an artist, is represented by *Liberation War Prisoners* (1970–71), a fantastically grim oil painting of a military automaton dragging stripped and bound figures through the streets.

In an exhibition so full of mythmaking, the extraordinary biographies of these last three artists take on a mythical quality themselves, encouraging us to wonder whether the artists ever really existed. This is an artist-curated show of artists staging curatorial hoaxes or unauthorised collaborations as conceptual artworks, mixed in with artists that might seem invented but are not, in order to overcomplicate issues of authorship and truly test the audience's gullibility. Once these potentially misleading strands are unravelled, what is left is an honest exhibition of Sachs and Soren's favourite influences. Some of the works are very obscure, while others are well known and somewhat obvious (eg the *Fax-backs*), but then the things that influence us often are. *Dean Kissick*



Pieces from the Harrogate Seven (detail), 2016.
Courtesy Château Shatto, Los Angeles