

GAVIN TURK and HELEN CHADWICK PISS OFF

Piss Off

The playful antagonism of the title captures the paradoxes in this show perfectly. The crude aggression of works made by the act of urination is brought to a surprising halt by the beauty, craftsmanship and organic fantasy of the works seen in the gallery.

These very different works by two artists who were friends and collaborators in life, but were from different genders and generations, one still active, the others life cut short by an untimely death. The title has a play on words that suggests a sporting fixture: a Play off as well as a warning perhaps to the audience to stay away from these toxic messages.

Helen Chadwick's Piss Flowers made in 1991 and 1992 only a few years before she died are poetic and elegant positive casts of the cavities made by her and her boyfriend urinating in the snow have fallic and labial forms: pistons and stamens, sprouting in isolation on the gallery floor like mushroom flowers. The stage for these is set by the copper and ultramarine organic forms of Gavin Turk's piss paintings, part of a series first made last year during a performance at Rifleman Gallery London. Visitors to the opening of the artists 'Me as Him' exhibition (an appropriation sampling riff on Andy Warhol's Camouflage Fright Wig series) were invited to urinate on a series of copper prepared canvases put out in the back yard of the gallery. The resulting organic explosions were then exhibited in the elegant toilets at Sothebys.

These images blatantly steal an idea done before many times, memorable by Warhol and his factory. The act of mark making using the personal body fluids of the great recycler imagery and inventor of cliché, replayed by a younger artist as an act of crass vandalism on authentication and respect for ones elders. The intellectual and formal degeneration of the Turk flowers play off against the formal beauty of Helen Chadwick's casts. Despite the instinctive repulsion felt by the nature of the materials and the corrosive nature of the recycling the Turk imagery beguiles with its spurts, flourishes and complex fractals.