London

"Nowhere Is Here"

THE DRAWING ROOM
Tannery Arts, Brunswick Wharf, 55 Laburnum Street
June 12–July 20

Drawing is traditionally believed to catch a raw and relatively unmediated glimpse of the artist’s inner vision as it flows onto paper. However, in "Nowhere Is Here," a group exhibition that explores the relationship between drawing and the natural environment, the psychological imprint moves in the opposite direction. Here, the activity of drawing is presented as an allographic gesture, where the artist is not the main actor but a liminal figure who traces outer spaces in order to shape inner worlds. Many of the works are executed in a photorealistic style but act in direct contrast to a photograph’s sense of "hereness." Axel Antas draws detailed copies of photographs he has taken in Epping Forest, adding small interventions such as a chair tied to a tree or, in Forest (Pendulum), 2008, a small twig dangling by string from the end of an uprooted tree trunk. Nearby, Nogah Engler’s series of delicate, fragmentary images oscillates between intensely crafted latticework curtains and sweeping outdoor scenes, such as patches of night sky, that fade and disperse before allowing you to get a sense of the real places from which the fragments seem to be drawn.

Although visually drab—its palette is a nearly uniform black, white, and gray—the exhibition stretches beyond its own walls with such vast, uninhabited landscapes. It is dominated by large-scale visions like Franziska Furter’s Remind Me, 2006, a meticulous hand transposition of a lakeside manga scene, and Reece Jones’s Inquisition and The Finger of Blame, both 2008, charcoal depictions of abandoned outposts in a surreal barren wilderness. In contrast, the thermo-hydrograph of Damien Roach’s Schwartzwald, 2008, provides in its constant temperature and humidity readings an ongoing, self-inscribing cartography of the exhibition itself, slowly marking the outlines of a new horizon. The artists in "Nowhere Is Here" do not open doors to their own psyches, but instead create conceptual spaces that visitors themselves can inhabit. In this way, the drawings here occupy a threshold that binds both artist and viewer in the construction of their environment.

—Chris Fite-Wassilak

03/07/2008