

guilt or shame. For his new site-specific project 'Veterans/Psychophonies', commissioned by and currently showing at Void, five British Army veterans were contracted to stage this act in Derry's Ebrington Barracks – a former British military base that has been partially renovated to house this year's Turner Prize. Here, the veteran 'victim/perpetrator' paradox is scrutinised, with soldiers portrayed as fundamental workers of the state representing the region's militarised past amid a 'theatre' of modern-day warfare. Filmed by an all-seeing camera, *Veterans*, 2013, journeys through the derelict Clock Tower and Officers' Mess. A paranormal hum is interspersed with silence, as the levitating camera ascends the guts of the dilapidated building. This vantage-point conjures a film noir paranoia and, in one heart-stopping moment, the figure of a man becomes visible through an open door. After that, other former soldiers are tracked down, each facing the corners of rooms. Photographic stills of these faceless figures are displayed as a public poster campaign across the city, but seem relatively innocuous. At one stage, the film experiences a 'rewind', further extending the supernatural encounter. Ultimately, the 'cameraman' is revealed as a military-style drone camera, which seems appropriate, given Ebrington's historic function as a helicopter landing-base. *Psychophonies*, 2013 (meaning 'soul voices'), is a series of audio pieces recorded in three local sites of reported or alleged torture. After the uneasy *Veterans* experience, multiple audio pareidolia emerge from the white noise. Radio static or the wind is imagined as breathing, murmuring or clawing. Each audio recording is 24.33 minutes – the duration of one side of an LP – recalling the 1980s phenomenon of 'back-masking', when subliminal, satanic messages were rumored to have been hidden in vinyl records, resulting in a phase of evangelical 'moral panic'.

Fittingly, upstairs from Void in the City Factory Gallery, **Willie Doherty's** retrospective exhibition 'UNSEEN' offers similarly chilling insights into the region's violent past. Presenting an overview of the artist's photographic and video works made in Derry since the mid 1980s, 'UNSEEN' conjures a common vocabulary with Sierra's practice. Where Sierra's *Psychophonies* soundscape resonates in sites of alleged torture, Doherty presents visual records of the aftermath of such scenes, evident in photographic works such as *Silence. After a Kneecapping*, 1985/2012. Dialogue between textual and photographic elements is a further feature of both artists' work, as is a preoccupation with borders, concealed entrances and obstructed passageways which symbolise social division and separated communities. Both artists probe the vexed relationship between visibility and concealment through landscape intervention, often documented from militarised, aerial vantage points. Works such as Doherty's colour film *Black Spot*, 1997, embody another parallel concern

– that of being a spectator while also being the subject of surveillance. In the context of Derry-Londonderry City of Culture 2013, efforts to censor, or to temporarily eradicate, evidence of the region's troubled history seem particularly prevalent, employing culture as a broker for regenerative peace-building. However, current artistic practice suggests that relationships with the past – including outmoded zeitgeists or those tempered with nostalgia or violence – must be visible or somehow preserved in the collective modern psyche for art to find the form it needs, and to evolve, accruing new meaning. ■

JOANNE LAWS is an arts writer based in the west of Ireland.

Phil Collins
rude boy, kek lok si
#2 2011

Amsterdam Round-up

Stedelijk Museum • Rijksmuseum • Huis Marseille

Over the past decade, Amsterdam has been caught up in a seemingly endless round of museum closures and renovations, planning problems, safety concerns, blown budgets and postponed reopenings. Then, suddenly, everything seems to come together all at once. Following last year's long-delayed relaunch of the Stedelijk Museum, both Huis Marseille and the Rijksmuseum have opened after undergoing extensive makeovers, expanding their exhibition spaces, shuffling collections and, in the latter case, accommodating bike lanes for the city's many cyclists. Whether through timely serendipity or institutional synergy, Amsterdam now looks very different from the last time I visited.

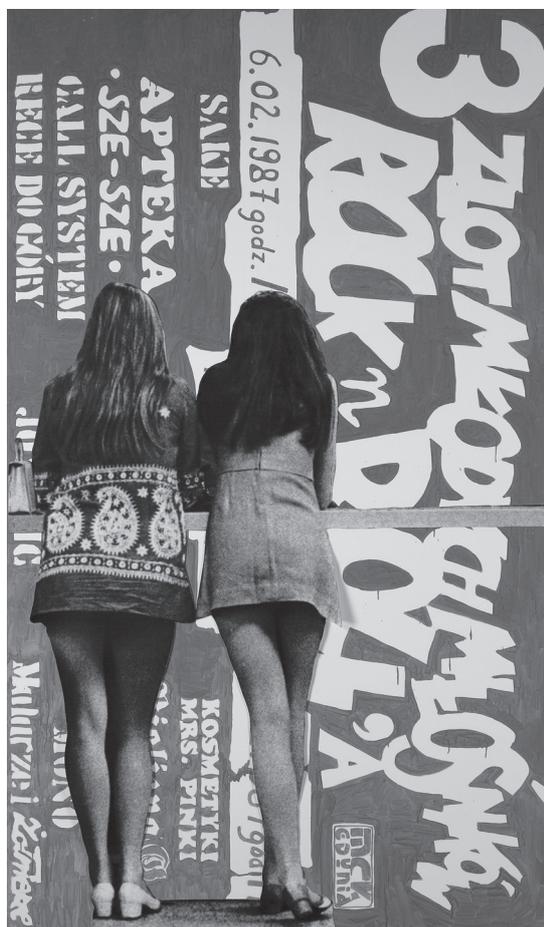
With all this extra waiting around, the exhibition programmes have a lot to deliver and, at the Stedelijk, the slight head start seems to have paid off. Set against the blockbuster survey of Kazimir Malevich and the Russian Avant-Garde, **Paulina Ołowska's** concurrent exhibition 'Au Bonheur des Dames' is a thoughtful counterpart, an extension of and digression on suprematist aesthetics and Soviet ideology. Her work deftly swerves between representations of communist idealism and bourgeois decadence, addressing the ways in which one informs and justifies the other through an eclectic array of styles and signifiers: advertising hoardings, photo spreads, realist painting, graffiti tags and shop display units. As in the early department stores of Emile Zola's novel from which the exhibition takes its name, Ołowska's jumble-sale, all-over approach resembles 'a tumbling of stuffs, as if they had fallen from the crowded shelves by chance, making them glow with the most ardent colours, lighting each other up by the contrast, declaring that the customers ought to have sore eyes on going out of the shop'.

In a single space, one finds *Palimpsest*, 2006, with its overlapping, neon-lit messages of '24h' and 'pizzapastasushi', a spattering of ovals, circles and arrows, and a stylised rendering of a nude woman stretched over a champagne glass, alongside freestanding canvas panels of magazine cut-outs embroidered against painted backgrounds (*Rock and Rolla*, 2006) or fragments of (counter-) revolutionary text (*Warsaw Belongs to the Bourgeoisies*, 2006). A vast mural, designed by graffiti artist Mick La Rock, combines references to pioneering female graffiti crews, shout-outs to Malevich and Zola, and the exhibition title in sparkling silver spray paint, while the gouache-on-canvas work *Crossword Puzzle with Lady in Black Coat*, 2009, juxtaposes the central figure – reminiscent of the novel's saleswoman protagonist Denise Baudu – against a backdrop of contrasting black-and-white blocks, opaque shapes and vacant spaces.

Throughout, the inextricability of these ostensibly oppositional ideologies is tied to desire, and specifically to a feminine longing for the accessories and accoutrements of a fantasised, unattainable 'other'. For example, Ołowska's paintings of children in crocheted sweaters,

or of a fashion model revealing the latest outfit, are based on Polish postcards of the 1980s, prized as a guide for sewing one's own trendy garments. The canvases convey a particularly ersatz quality, an awkward clunkiness that imbues the figures with a shabbily homespun charm. In their reproduction, Olowska makes these mundane cards 'strange'; they amplify the naivety of the period's aspirations towards western cosmopolitanism while, at the same time, recalling the similarly idealised portrayals of Soviet women (albeit delivered under very different conditions and expectations) that bookended the careers of Malevich and much of his contemporaries.

There is something strange about **Henk Wildschut's** exhibition at the Rijksmuseum, too. While one might expect the city's pre-eminent historical museum to have a somewhat fraught relationship with contemporary art (and its display on Modernism confirms this, siting an actual airplane among its examples of De Stijl artworks), it is hard to figure out what exactly Wildschut's photographic series 'Our Daily Bread' is doing here and why the Rijksmuseum commissioned it. Recording the processes of local food production, Wildschut's images are as crisp and clinical as one would expect in the Netherlands: figures in spotless Tyvek suits and surgical masks loom over control panels, trays display dishes of various specimens and samples, hunks of beef are neatly arranged on sorting racks, and vast factory units house gleaming steel machines. However, his photographs are never as straightforward as they appear. Like his earlier, much-admired series 'Shelter', which revealed makeshift domiciles of intricate beauty alongside crumbling shanty towns, his position is often counter-intuitive, subverting preconceived ideas of social exclusion or, in 'Our Daily Bread', the rigorous mechanisation of agricultural production. Yet the series leaves a lingering, and unpleasant, aftertaste. The stark, compositional precision of the images and the facilities themselves feel bloodless and sanitised, a sensation not helped



Paulina Olowska
Rock and Rolla 2006

by the artist's own admission that the project effected a sympathetic understanding of large-scale food production. It might be less overt perhaps, but art can still find itself in the service of propaganda.

This sense of the unseen, the underlying reality, that Wildschut attempts to locate (and which ultimately he only obscures further), informs **The Rediscovery of the World** at the newly expanded Huis Marseille, an extensive survey of artists whose photographic-based practices seem to consistently challenge and critique their chosen medium. Loosely operating around ideas of the immateriality of exchange and communication in everyday life, the photograph here is best seen as a flawed approximation, a sideways glimpse of one's surroundings or subject matter. Tanya Long, whose site-specific installation *Untitled 01-35*, 2013, occupies a high courtyard wall, and which is only visible through an interior window, exemplifies this approach. A grid of abstract images, of diagonal white forms streaked with black and red, they initially appear identical, only to reveal themselves as individually unique compositions created by folding and creasing the paper in the darkroom. Following the same, choreographed sequence for each print, they nevertheless display the subtle deviations and imperfections of physical manipulation. There is a nice correlation, too, between the artist and the spectator: Long's approach is hindered by the sightless conditions of the lab, the viewer by a predisposed tendency to register the images as uniform, only gradually recognising their differences. In Katja Mater's work, the relationship between painting and photography is complicated through processes of documentation. Her 'Density Drawings' series used the camera to intermittently record the stages of painting, layering these images one atop another on the negative to build up a composite print almost identical to the finished canvas. In *Parallel Planes 07*, 2013, three photographs capture variations of geometric forms in subtle shades of blue, different phases in the production of the finished, monochromatic acrylic painting that hangs beside them.

Throughout the exhibition, the implied objectivity of the photograph is subverted: Popel Coumou's interactive lightboxes of layered images, where certain elements can be manually adjusted to recede or disappear; Scarlett Hooft Graafland's staged performances and inventions using local artists in Madagascar; and Ilona Plaum's incorporation of drawn patterns and cut-out shadows into inkjet prints, inferring an ambiguous uncertainty towards what is constructed and what is 'real'. Unconcerned with the camera's supposed capacity to capture the proof of one's surroundings, the artists here paradoxically get closer to the actuality of an ephemeral, immaterial world. One sees not merely their record of this world but a demonstration of their place within it, and how they remake it in their own way. ■

CHRIS CLARKE is a critic and senior curator at Lewis Glucksman Gallery, Cork.

Bloomberg New Contemporaries

Spike Island Bristol 14 September to 10 November

There is something refreshing about the Bloomberg New Contemporaries series, and it is not just the unjaded optimism and youthful exuberance that oozes from so many of the works, selected this year by Ryan Gander, Chantal Joffe and Nathaniel Mellors. Rather, it lies in the fact that each instalment is virtually uncurated, with little attempt at cohesion and certainly no theme to speak of. This is especially true of this year's sprawling offering, which features 46 artists spread across two locations. While such curatorial sins would normally be unforgivable, in the context of this democratic, open exhibition for current final-year students and recent graduates of UK