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ARTFORUM

CRITICS' PICKS



“CONTORT YOURSELF”

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07.12.14-08.30.14 *Kayne Griffin Corcoran*

The small, sincere voice of Sue Tompkins echoed from the courtyard into the gallery during the opening of “Contort Yourself,” an exhibition of four Glasgow-based artists. Singing with all the passion of a teenage punk chanteuse but with none of the backing music, Tompkins’s voice was at first jangly, then awkward, settling into its own strange beauty by the end of her performance. Inside the ample, James Turrell–designed gallery, her paintings and works on paper include smallish gestures—signs, letters, shapes—writ loud, like her voice, by the odd and singular force of their aesthetic ardor. Hung low to the ground, the paintings overlooked vitrines of her typewritten works, each a jumble of design and image coded out of typography with a few words written almost in declarations.

The room over, Jim Lambie’s vividly varicolored circus ladders reach from floor to ceiling. With mirrored rungs, each leads nowhere but back at you in their reflections. One step beyond, behind a curtain, Luke Fowler’s feature-length video *All Divided Selves*, 2011, is on view, a beautiful collage of archival footage circling the controversial Scottish psychiatrist and poet R. D. Laing, who quietly winks at the camera in the middle of a group-therapy session. With Jonnie Wilke’s ethereal sounds tinkling out of a hi-fi back in the main gallery, the show begs some stab at their unified Scottishness (or more specifically Glaswegian-ness): the absurd and sometimes twee heights of their joy, the cutting chill of their desolate winters in the poorest city in the UK. Curated by Glasgow-based gallery the Modern Institute and titled after the electric jolt of No Waver James Chance’s most famous tune (which also appears in a poster above Wilke’s spinning record), this summer show comes together like a song.