

# ARTORAN

Nolias Gallery Newsletter

issue 01 March 2006

by Simon Lepp

On the 11th of March Nolia's Gallery will be one year old and in that time many students and graduates from London's art schools have ground their teeth with the difficult task of curating and organising their own shows at the Thomas A Becket on the Old Kent Road. This gallery is one of the few affordable spaces available to students, it is a 1000 square foot exhibition space, with café and bar facilities. Previously a boxing club within the Thomas aBecket pub, the space has a great sense of history including the fact that David Bowie wrote Ziggy Stardust in an upstairs room. Nolia Devlin is very enthusiastic and keen to give undergraduates / new graduates the chance to exhibit their work. She is an artist

Since April 2005, when the gallery opened, Nolia has offered the exhibition space to many students and graduates and the gallery now has exhibitions planned throughout 2006.

My first contact with the gallery and Nolia herself occurred when I visited Machismo, I didn't realise it was the first show at this newly opened gallery, and nearly a year later I put on my own exhibition with 4 fellow artists under the title Behind our brittle shells. That was my first experience with organising and curating my own work outside a university environment. It was hard but well worth it.

The project taught me a lot about how to deal with people, with other artists and their work, how to find the necessary information on funding, on services such as



## Boxing & Glam Rock

Glamourhammer was the first exhibition held at the Thomas a Becket even before it became Nolias Gallery. This was March 2001 and the project took off when David Lock was introduced to the rich historical background of the most famous boxing venue in South London.

After doing some research of his own Lock was inspired by stories of gangsters, boxers, the swinging 60's and David Bowie's glam rock. Nolia Devlin offered the premises to Lock, then studying an MA in Fine Art at Goldsmiths, to stage an exhibition about the colourful cultural background of the Becket. Boxing and glam rock were fused into the title Glamourhammer. The exhibition featured works by fellow Goldsmiths Fine Art students.

The pieces were bombastic works exhibited in the boxing gym above the bar where the ring and other boxing props such as punching bags and gym equipment became part of the display. The aim was to maintain the feel of the old days when fights were staged there. The exhibition was a big hit, Time Out listed the show and even published images. It is unusual for a student exhibition to receive such attention. Furthermore Brit-art sponsored the students with £1000 and to cap it all Mr Saatchi himself made an appearance and

purchased one of Kirsten Glass' pieces.

A number of artists who were involved in Glamourhammer have done quite well for themselves. Video artist Anthony Gross has curated Biennale! International Artist Film & Video, currently touring China, Dian Bauer was recently commissioned to create a large installation on display at the Showroom gallery under the title Bludgeonator, and Kirsten Glass is currently exhibiting her large collage paintings at the Hales gallery.

This exhibition took place well before the Becket was transformed into the project space it is today. You could say that Glamourhammer was the prehistory of Nolias Gallery.

This extremely positive initial experience was the spark that inspired Nolia to turn the Becket into a gallery devoted to students and recent graduates.

After running this project for one year and witnessing and being inspired by the students' talent and enthusiasm, Nolia is determined to carry on with her artistic projects, she now has a new gallery in Great Suffolk St and this newsletter is an effort to reach a wider public and give more exposure to future undergraduate and young artists' show in London.



Machismo, featuring artists Mike Thatcher, Paul Mart, Dunstan James and James Howard was the first exhibition to open at Nolia's Gallery in April 2005.

herself, originally from Malaysia, now in semi retirement and spending her time establishing opportunities for new artists. She describes her gallery as a 'project or opportunity space' providing undergraduates with the chance to learn to curate a show outside of their university studies. The gallery space is offered to all undergraduates and new graduates something rarely found and much appreciated by aspiring artists.

advertising, printing, transport and insurance. And all this was on top of getting our pieces finished in time for the opening. I must say we made a few mistakes along the way and things didn't go exactly according to plan but everything was ready and in the right place for our opening night which pulled in a considerable crowd. I was nerve racking but I really enjoyed it and am looking forward to getting the next one ready, hopefully after this summer.



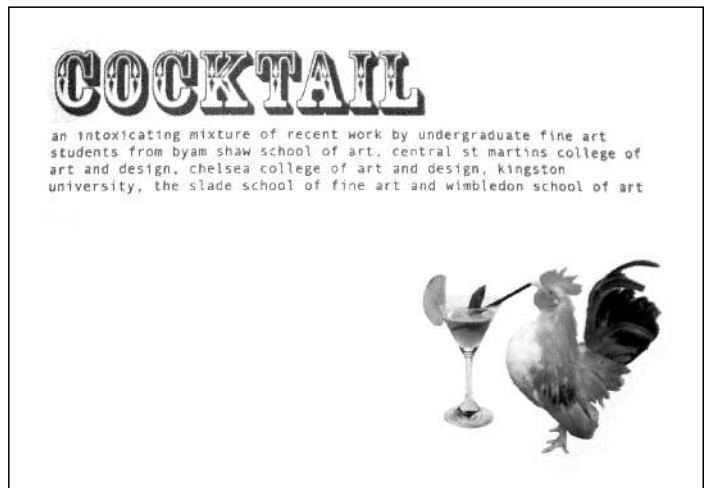
A 180° panoramic view of Nolia's Gallery in the midst of the curatorial chaos which accompanies the setting up of every new show. In this case it was Behind our Brittle Shells an exhibition featuring work

## Curating for beginners

The task of curating, organising and setting up one's own show can be a daunting one when it is done for the first time. Dealing with the practical aspects of exhibiting such as budgets, logistics, schedules, advertising and so on don't come easy to artistic temperaments. They are not necessarily difficult tasks in themselves once you have the experience but they can be confusing when you haven't done anything like it before. The first thing you should think about is the space. Finding an affordable exhibition space in London can be difficult, and you must book well in advance. It is a good idea to organise group shows to spread the renting costs.

I find that the main problem in curating a show is deciding what the aim or message of the exhibition will be, especially when the work of various artists is shown together. The job of the curator is to make sense of every different approach from each artist involved and come up with a unifying discourse that will bind different styles, mediums and subjects into a coherent whole. A single artist can stick to an idea right from the start of his artistic production for a given show, or even a group of artists can decide that they will produce works to put a show together with a single idea in mind, but things can get rather more complicated when a curator faces the task of selecting works by different artists who have produced their pieces independently. In this case the curator must strive to understand the work of each artist, their backgrounds, interests and discourses and try to distill from all these different elements a kind of unifying glue that will make sense of it all and give the exhibition a direction and purpose.

Funding, logistics and advertising can become a nightmare if they are not planned in a feasible and realistic way. A number of institutions can be approached for funding such as the Arts Council, local councils, your college or university, or even private businesses that may be interested in sponsoring an exhibition in exchange for advertising and having their name associated with the arts, but all this will require a detailed project proposal. It can be a big effort but the reward is the experience and satisfaction you will get from being capable of making your exhibition happen.



## Intoxicating Mixture

Cocktail was a very ambitious show which brought together the works of students from 6 different universities, Byam Shaw, Central St Martin, Chelsea, Kingston, Slade and Wimbledon. Held in May 2005, these artists showed real professionalism in selecting and hanging their works which included sculpture, painting, illustration and media. 'The biggest shock was the amount of leg work involved getting press releases and invites sorted out' commented exhibiting artist Nicholas Jones about this project.



A constructive evocation of his early memories of Japan by Sol Archer exhibited as part of Cocktail.

A personal view of CRISTOPHER WILSON's work by Anna Scher, founder of Anna Scher Theatre School Islington.  
*Spiritual. Sexual. Sensual. Spontaneous. Existential. Essential. Exceptional.*  
 His exuberant energy catapults, captivates, invigorates. I never cease to be amazed by the sheer essence of his work eclecticism, how he is evolving. I feel closely connected to his soul, his integrity, and will always appreciate the joy he has brought into my life. His dynamic diversity from ANGELS to RWANDA to the arc of the HEART to MOON CALF knows no bounds.  
 Flourish my friend.



Mother and Child, Christopher Wilson



Works by Ben Gavin, Simon Lepp, Adebola Oni, Irene Perez and Bethan Williams reflecting on various types of social masks and defense mechanisms relating to identity.

## 'Get Lost'-26th August 2005

'Get Lost' at Nolias Gallery was the first exhibition that I did after leaving college a year ago. In the whirl of essays and dissertations in the third year of doing a degree its very difficult to have time to actually do your own work, away from an education system-and a year later I found myself working maniacally for an exhibition on Old Kent Road.

Prior to my degree and the Nolias Gallery I was working within sales-cold calling customers to sell gas and electricity. Money was obviously the only rewarding aspect of the job, ringing old ladies who were very hard of hearing and being shouted at on the phone were the perks of the job. It was therefore no surprise that a one day a week design course led me to return to further education. After thoughtful consideration I decided that it was 'now or never!' and hence gave up on the cold calling and the nights in the pub (drowning my sorrows and the echoes of 'I DON'T WANT NO GAS, NOW F\*£%^\$^ OFF!') and applied for an HND at Southwark College in Bermondsey, the interview which involved walking around a construction site as the college seemed to be falling apart with a friendly tutor inspired me to attend the HND, as if by fluke a small design agency rang me after 6 months and offered me a job, so everything fell into place. After completing the HND in Graphic Design I decided to attend Croydon College where I topped

up my HND with one year to a degree. Inspired by their facilities-screen printing, etching, printing and photography I avoided the computer and hand drew characters, made metal books and veered away from graphic design. Finding exhibition space in London is very expensive and surfing the internet one day at work I came across the University of the Arts website with an advert for gallery space, slightly dubious I rang the number to be answered by a friendly enthusiastic Nolia, after visiting the space and meeting Nolia I decided that I would curate an exhibition. The idea behind 'Get Lost' was that I really felt at a cross roads in my life, slightly lost and confused and it seemed that all my friends were as well! The exhibition helped me develop more of my drawing skills both in the flyer and the light boxes that I made. I really enjoyed exhibiting and am grateful to Nolia for offering us the chance to exhibit in London.



Nolia and Alison, co-curator of *Stand in the corner...* at their private view.

### My Story by Nolia Devlin

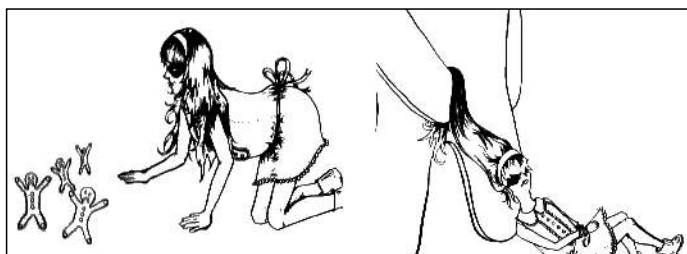
Art, music and performing arts were subjects not favoured by my father. He did not allow me to take art for my 'O' Levels although I got an A for my LCE. I had to take Pure Science subjects, in Chemistry, Biology and Physics at Raffles Girls School in Singapore.

I arrived in England in 1970 and was a civil servant with the Inland Revenue. Still no sign of artiness emerging...

In 1992 I started my Wine bar with Malaysian food. I did some murals on the wall of the burning of the rain forest in Malaysia.

In 1994 I moved to London with the family and opened a Jazz Café bar in Liverpool Road, Islington. As I couldn't afford a muralist, my husband let me go wild on the walls

with my three pots of paint. The result was described by the writer from Time Out Year book 1995, as Naïve style of painting. I was naive. I rang him, (I think his name was Guy), and said "how could you call me naïve, and that the painting was done from the heart ...memory of my childhood days". He cut me short and said, Nolia ..wow..wow...it's a compliment. "Naïve" style of painting, is a school of art." Well what can I say...but sorry and thank you. When my children left the nest I decided to open a project gallery for the art students, to see and share the freedom of expressing their creativity. It has been hard work but I love every minute of it. I'm a *student* again learning with every weekly show, a year on, March 2006 ARTORAN is born.



Work by Barbie Lawrie from *Stand in the corner and think about what you've drawn.*

# 'Not Quite London'

reviewed by Devlin Love (Alabama 3)

Held at Nolias Gallery, down the old Kent Road, and to be curated by three B.A students by the names of Tim, Matt and Rex, from the Kingston university mob. My mother had invited me to check out yet another great artistic melting pot of an evening, complete with the promise of some vibrant musical entertainment from 'Dakar Rally'. In I waltz, immediately drawn to my left, following the irresistible smell of that home cooking, that I was so used to... ginger...garlic...chilli potatoes...I was lead into mum's newly decorated Malaysian grotto, which boasts £5 eat as much as you like...I think I'll stop now. (there isn't another show for at least a week, and I'm starving, as a result of relying on my own culinary skills!) Two small steps back into the gallery...

...First impressions of the atmosphere has to be unavoidably described as 'Not Quite London.' With an unusual buzz from the students, all reeling in a celebration of their independence of curation, Mum was so pleased that her motive had been realised and gleaming proud of the family like atmosphere that had naturally occurred in her artist' sanctuary.

The showing was incredibly enticing with so many different aspects of life displayed in animation mayhem. From Bobby-hip- hoppers, bopping around the city, to side splittingly funny spoof works on music-related advertising, the variety was tastier than a packet of Ravels. Following random conversation, I soon realised I shared a common feeling of pleasant shock and excitement that these works could step so easily into a commercially successful world, but with the right integrity, and soulful motivation.

It's packed, and the vibe pisses on Shorditch. Fellow supporters, whilst egging on Dakar Rally, are dying for an excuse to pogo like it's 1977. They did so, and like a musically transmitted disease, it wasn't long before the whole room assumed the same motion! I have only one criticism of the evening's events; I couldn't hear what the singer had to say, and judging by the passion of delivery, a decent P.A. would have done him good. However, Kingston wasn't deterred, as I spotted the crowd mouthing the lyrics in rhythmic unison, all ecstatic about being part of the Dakar Rally Showtime.

Glowing like an excited, neon strip light, from the energy in Nolias Gallery, I decided to drop her in it. So I seized the chance and asked the lead singer (who's ear I had to find amidst his shook up, rock and roll hair!) if there was time for a surprise...

...'Who wants to hear the owner of the gallery sing?' The audience replied with a roar of anticipation, and little mother, (big ideas...) made her way to the microphone and jammed a wild version of 'Summer time' with the band. Fantastic. Just get your arse down to Nolias. I rest my case.

## Chilli, Ginger & Garlic by Nolia

Cooking as art? ...Yes, colour, presentation, skill, technique and taste are a part of cooking.

I've created this collection of recipes of simple dishes with the basic ingredients of chilli, ginger and garlic, with the wok being the main utensil. The purpose is to enable the reader to use the wok repetitively, the way you would practice with a paintbrush, until the technique is mastered. The correct use of the wok is essential to a good Malaysian dish. The oil must always be nearly smoking hot. Never put garlic in on its own as it will burn. It has to be put in after onion or in a paste of my basic ingredients of, "chilli ginger and garlic" Enjoy Cooking!

### KENTANG CHILLI

Chilled potatoes  
6oz Romano potatoes  
4oz dried red chillies (or ½ tsp chilli powder)  
4oz shallots (or 1 small onion)  
3 cloves garlic  
2oz fresh ginger  
2oz tamarind pulp (or 1 tsp lemon juice)  
4 tablespoons cooking oil  
1 tablespoon sugar  
Salt to taste  
8fl. Oz water

Peel and slice the potatoes into ½ inch cubes. Wash and put to one side. Soak the chillies in luke-warm water for about 5 minutes (if chilli powder is used this step is not necessary) and then drain the water. Peel the shallots, garlic and ginger and blend them with the soaked red chillies into a paste. Heat the oil in a wok and fry the paste. Stir-fry for 1 minute. Add potatoes, then the water and the sugar. Bring to boil, lower the heat to medium and leave it until the potatoes are cooked and most of the water has evaporated. Best served with white rice and stir-fried vegetables (which will be next month's recipe).

FORTHCOMING EXHIBITIONS MARCH 2006

### Nolias Gallery at the Thomas A Becket - 320 Old Kent Road SE1 5UE London

**Eating Under Water**, private view 6pm Fri Feb 24th and continues from Feb 25th to Mar 01st, 1 to 6 pm - BA Fine Art students from Wimbledon, Central St Martin and Salford (Manchester).

**Camikelsee**, private view 6 pm Fri 3rd and continues from the 4th to the 9th, 1 to 6 pm - A collective of Camberwell and Chelsea undergraduates whose works search through memory and their everyday environment with a vibrant range of styles and attitudes. Dean Pincham, Alicia Logan, Jo Kay, Tom Barnet, Rob Sherwood, Jessica Jang, Chris McSherry, Shi Chi Lin, Mark Rhead, Simon Corby, Daniel Kelly.

**Egg**, private view 6 pm Fri 10th and continues from the 11th to the 15th, 1 to 6 pm - Mark Lungley and Galen Wainwright. A satirical and humorous view of modern life seen through art. Their works speak of the effort and frustration involved in preparing an exhibition and how their original expectations are left unfulfilled after struggling with their choice of materials.

**Misadventure**, private view 6pm Fri 17th and continues 18th and 19th, 1 to 6 pm - S. P. Haal. MISADVENTURE is a sound installation made up of a cacophony of audio samples, as the soundtrack of an invisible conflagration presented in the darkened gallery space. In GAME the tourists innocently photographing landmarks is turned in to a sinister chase. Another video recorded in Thailand documents the artists meeting and collaboration with a blind street singer in Bangkok.

**Lina B. Frank - Live Dance**, 6pm Wed 22nd - Lina B. Frank is a member of the University of the Arts Performance Company, an open platform for anyone who shares a passion for theatre, dance and performance supported by the students' union.

**Unik Beats - Live percussion tournament**, 6pm Fri 24th - A percussion championship where teams of drummers battle it out over an instrumental background during approximately 3 minutes and are scored by 3 judges and the crowd's noise level.

**Virtual Reality**, private view 6pm Fri 31st and continues from Apr 1st to the 5th - Chelsea School of Art, MA Fine Art students.

### Nolias Gallery No2 - 60 Great Suffolk Street SE1 0BL London

**Misadventure**, private view 6pm Thu 23rd and continues from the 24th to the 28th 10am to 6 pm - S. P. Haal

