



It's startling to be reminded by this book how convention-bound are one's own reviews. That sustained attention span, that requisite length, that measured phrasing, that sobriety, that objectivity — all to produce a model of its type which, after such ironing out, probably doesn't offer much insight or entertainment to the reader. And without that to offer, this questionable form of commentary called reviewing becomes indefensible. This outcome is one of many under scrutiny here, where the review structure is pushed to its limits and where entertainment and insight are generously squandered. Ninety-five of the reviews are written by Matthew Arnatt and David Mollin, leaving Alex Farquharson to frame the project by contributing five more measured pieces, albeit of the worst shows.

These hundred reviews are the result of a week's visits to an unlikely selection of London galleries. Most of these are well-known contemporary art spaces but they are joined by a significant number which would never make it past the door of most reviewing magazines, their exhibitions suspended in a universe beyond the reach of art critics' comprehension. It's in some of their most interesting pieces that

Matthew Arnatt and David Mollin grapple with the lost art of these forgotten spaces, like anthropologists who must develop new terminology to grasp atavistic motivations. Of course at times the effort overwhelms them and they expire incoherently. It's significant that they effectively assume this outsider role with many of the more acceptable contemporary art showcases in order to illuminate the interests at play there. By flattening the hierarchy of public, commercial, artist-run and vanity spaces they offer rueful critique on what these days constitutes alternative status as artist or gallery.

We aren't spared the impact on their patience and sense of fairness from a week of tiring work. The irritation when faced by closed galleries or dull art is second nature to us all and it's right to feel dragged through the streets with them. It's not just the wish to realise a snapshot of a milieu by exhaustive commentary that makes this have the freshness of an older agenda, as if a Victorian writer like Thackeray were back in London playing out a new comedy of manners. There's also the sense in this writing that the newer idioms like video and installation are given so much critical rope that they involuntarily hang themselves and that by contrast painting, which is allowed little room to manoeuvre these days, has sometimes survived memorably. Perhaps this is the result of saturation exposure to whatever shows come along, when most of the time we're safely selective in our gallery visits knowing ahead of time that we're never going to be taking on more than we can pre-digest. If so, it's a useful cautionary tale.

Another throwback of the book is its

evocation of 19C political broadsheets handed out to passersby. It suggests that there's certainly a place for this kind of street-side skirmish (outside the breezy gloss of TV and radio commentary) to throw into relief the overly reflective and mediated criticism that annotates today's artworld. There have been very different examples of this with the likes of BANK's newspaper and Donald Parsnips' Daily Journal, both sadly long since ended. 100 reviews, now in its second appearance, shows how effectively this kind of immediate and impulsive commentary can secure an accurate picture of our time.

Mark Harris

JOSEF ALBERS
Waddington Galleries
28 March - 21 April

I don't mind Waddingtons. If the galleries in London were books on a huge bookshelf gathering dust, then Waddingtons is like that book by Norbert Lynton that you haven't picked up for years and at one point hated, but now in the terrifying ravages of mid-life crisis, sitting alone, you can browse fondly through its pages and remember...

In this show are paintings by that hugely influential Joseph Albers and his wonderful 'Homage to the Square' paintings. These were painted between 1950 and 1976. The idea of the square paintings was to show the way solid colours visibly change according to the colour that surrounds them. It's soothing to think about that as it takes your mind off other things, niggly little things. Things that ruin a good relationship in the end.

The photographs and photo-collages, also on display, include portraits of the artists Paul Klee and Wassily Kandinsky as well as images of travels in Europe and Mexico. Biographical, but also exploring what Albers called 'Poetry through scientific means'. These were taken between 1928 and 1938 and show a relaxed Albers framed by the countryside

and mountains, having a picnic with a loved one, perhaps? Better times in photographs, selective, misleading. Takes a little bit of will to try and remember what she was really like, what she did. D.M.

ERNST ALTMANN
The Lomo London Gallery
to 23 March

Despite the date this show was still on. Bleak wallpaper of housing blocks, sadly called 'Angst' - cos this place is great. It's run by a German called Fabien Monheim and he has a real wit and panache to his genuine obsession that pisses on my obsessions. This guy, like many others apparently round the world, has a cranky obsession with Lomo cameras, and this is in fact less a gallery than a Lomo Embassy - there are other Lomo Embassies in other cities around the world. The headquarters is in Vienna where the LomoGlobal event is being prepared at this very moment. It is also where Lomobags, Lomoportfolios, Lomocrates and Lomowalls are being painstakingly catalogued and documented. But, hey, you don't have to go to Vienna. Go to LomoLondon and find out what all the fuss is about. D.M.

ART NOW: ART
AND MONEY ONLINE
Tate Britain
6 March - 3 June

If ever a show promised a lot ... Not only that but it rasps on until June. Now you know why Julian Stallabrass writes. How many "surreal and often hilarious juxtapositions" (press release) can you stand?

Still, Stallabrass's curation is free of con-