

this is tomorrow



Ivan's Ecstasy
Bryan Dooley / Ed Fornieles / Alistair Frost
Sheraton Park Lane Hotel
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Review by Ciara Moloney

It is commonly accepted that art in hotel rooms should serve as decoration alone - the more inoffensive, the better. From identikit Ikea abstractions in a contemporary chain to anaemic landscapes at classier accommodation; cutting edge contemporary art is simply not on the agenda, unless of course one is staging a temporary art fair (cf the Armory Show, which began its existence at The Gramercy Park Hotel, New York in 1994 or today's 'Dependent' Fair, also in New York).

Like 'Dependent', 'Ivan's Ecstasy' was a one-night only affair staged in a hotel, this time in London. Whilst ostensibly a three-man exhibition with Alistair Frost, Ed Fornieles and Bryan Dooley, the social experience of the show became irrevocably entangled with the works themselves. Only a small group of guests were invited to attend, by virtue of receiving Ed Fornieles' plastic burger keyrings. This author procured access only through the auspices of thisistomorrow, and it was clear that the premises could play host only to a select few.

From the beginning, the visitor felt party to a dark secret. Guests were issued with instructions to enter via the hotel's rear entrance, to look "inconspicuous" and, if questioned by staff, to claim a meeting with Mr Czudej, the curator. This added nicely to the sordid feel of events and, with only the artists' names to go on, it was impossible to anticipate what would lie behind the hotel room's door. Still, we knocked, half-expecting an orgy, only for Czudej to open the door and reveal a typically bland hotel room and four (fully-clothed) people standing around chatting quietly.

A quick glance revealed a range of works installed in the bedroom, the majority by Frost, who was also the most gung-ho in responding to the exhibition context, creating customised dressing gowns and a 'do not disturb' sign, the latter featuring a simple sunglasses graphic - perhaps a nod to the implied glamour of the hotel, home to a peripatetic celebrity jet-set. Two acrylic paintings of burgers, in similarly stark black graphic style, were casually set upon chairs in the room. For 'Image coming soon', Frost had carefully written 'ARTISTS' in the bathroom's steamed-up mirror in Star Wars style capitals, in keeping with the paintings' brash pop aesthetics.

Bryan Dooley's panel work, 'Four Seasons' showed a voyeuristic glimpse into an architectural interior, which complemented the exhibition's location beautifully. 'Highball 2', a long narrow print pasted onto a corner, highlighted those architectural elements usually obscured by hotel soft furnishings.

Striking a different note, Fornieles' contribution 'Red Light Winter', which consisted of a crumpled pile of bloodied bedsheets (thankfully fake), momentarily created the mise-en-scène of a film noir - a notion soon dispelled by the exhibition visitors awkwardly making small talk over plastic cups of whiskey, complete with kitschy cherries.

With no press release and no immediately obvious relationship between the works, the curatorial premise of Ivan's Ecstasy remains mysterious - who is Ivan? Why show these particular artists? Why this unusual setting? This latter point felt somewhat of a missed opportunity to stage one of Fornieles' fact-fiction blurring performances. Still, the installation did succeed in creating intriguing visual relationships between the works on show, invoking the many cultural associations of the hotel, by turns, satirical and macabre. A promising dynamic has been established which will hopefully be elaborated upon in future iterations.