

ART: **Sasha Craddock** on the work of 17 art school graduates and **Ken Rowat** on forestry sculptures

## The fast Dockland track to simplicity

**F**ROWNED on in the same way as self-published poetry, wistful attempts at exhibitions by friends and co-students have normally failed. Freeze, though, is a success. Organised by Damien Hirst, one of the exhibitors, it brings together the work of 17 recent art school graduates in a derelict Dockland building in south-east London.

It succeeds perhaps because ruthless decisions have been made by one person, but maybe the very nature of art school products has changed in order

to reflect the set-piece one-liner that succeeds in the commercial world.

At first sight, there is no self-doubt paraded in this line-up, no humour or innuendo either. This is sparse and serious stuff, its formality helps it along. It seems no longer necessary to chart each stage of decision-making in today's art; mistake and confusion are no longer virtues, humble grind has been replaced by "I can do that too". Minimal art was only allowed at the end of the journey but here we have a speedily at-

tained simplicity.

All of the artists share the same attitude to their material. By generally using one particular thing (metal, rubber, frothy foam) as idea, the stuff itself becomes more than half the art.

There are clues at times that point to inexperience, the tendency to fiddle and over-explain plagues every artist. Fiona Rae's large invented lettering parades across the white canvas in gloriously acidic colour. The idea is great, but she pushes and prods the paint uneasily in trying to make it hold there.

Steven Adamson's rubber wall piece opens out from the

wall — flower, flap, or military hat, it doesn't need the coloured worms to say anything more. Anya Gallicio's carpet of melted lead and bronze loses its sharp edge and flatness in the flirtation of splattered swirls. Gary Hume's excellently painted surface is literally undermined by the geometric shapes that lie below.

Damien Hirst with his grey cardboard boxes that sit up high like a Cubist nest, and Richard Patterson, whose small pencil drawings are the equivalent of a child's circular pattern making, have a quiet control of their materials that clearly comes out of a Modernist

tradition.

Art is always like a fast-moving children's roundabout. It is dangerous to leap on it at the wrong speed and from the wrong angle — it is important to run alongside for some time beforehand. Most of these exhibitors are moving at the right speed. Held in a beautiful building by the river, this show serves as an antidote to the tired thematic Postmodern styles that have been clipped on to the fronts of recent Dockland development outside.

● *Freeze at PLA Building, Security Gate 16, Ploughway, Docklands, London SE16.*

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