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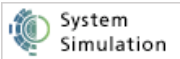


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**PANACEAHOHOUSE AT MANCHESTER
CORNERHOUSE GALLERIES**

By Kay Carson

03/11/2006



Michael Pinsky, Viral Planting, 2006 Photo: Colin Gray

Kay Carson enjoys most of the art in a playfully subversive group show at Manchester Cornerhouse Galleries.

A project designed to rip off the band-aid purporting to hold society together and find the definitive cure-all for humanity's problems is on show at Manchester's Cornerhouse.

Running until November 19 2006, PanaceaHothouse, by Michael Pinsky, Zoe Walker and Neil Bromwich, comprises installations from the tongue-in-cheek to the plain disturbing, but in a good way.

Pinsky's Healing Wall (2006) is a prime example: a green, fluorescent piece, the piercing rays of which instantly evoke shades of Dan Flavin...until you realise you are looking at nine first-aid green crosses, the kind normally associated with 24-hour pharmacies. A sign which normally brings with it a sigh of relief as help is nearby.

Zoë Walker and Neil Bromwich, Sci-fi Hot Tub, 2006 (with the artists) Photo: Colin Gray



However, stare at the grid long enough and its intense, blinding light and dizziness-inducing flashing will tell you that too much of a good thing can be bad.

Likewise, Panacea Model (2004), a miniature architectural model for a bright, spacious new town, replacing a previously deprived area, seems innocuous at first. But Pinsky, Walker and Bromwich's futuristic cityscape is made from sinister materials: surgical wipe canisters and syringes make robust buildings with pillars at the entrance, while frayed pill cups provide the flora in the gardens.

A hot air balloon dangling above provides a double-edged sword. People may look from on high, but they are mere observers; conversely, are others getting high - literally - to escape the troubles of life in a rundown inner city?



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Zoë Walker & Neil Bromwich,
Friendly Frontier,
2005 Photo: Colin Gray

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Sci-fi Hot Tub (2006) gets twice the attention by being included as an installation and featuring in a seven-minute film. Walker and Bromwich's inflatable iceberg, housing a spa pool, is curious and unwieldy, but gets the message across. Something as natural as water and ice is made plastic and phoney.

In the movie, the blow-up tub is floating on Kielder Water in Northumberland, the perfect juxtaposition. An area of raw and natural beauty is being upstaged by the new arrival, this puffed-up lump of synthetic nothingness. Everyone loves it.

I don't like it, but I know why. The truth hurts. Sadly, this sentiment of fetishising the artificial, from cosmetic surgery to instant food to ironic, old-fashioned ringtones for mobile phones, is so reflective of the consumer-saturated lifestyles that we have been led, like genetically-modified lambs, to lead.

Michael Pinsky,
Healing Wall,
2006



In terms of visual impact hitting you smack between the eyes, Viral Planting (2006) is superb. A multi-coloured wall of flowers - plastic, of course - represents the cell formation of a viral infection.

Again, in true Pinsky fashion, what appears aesthetically pleasing is hiding a menacing message. Are we talking political pesticide here? Bringing artificial comfort to society's sick? It is a remarkably moving piece, like a floral tribute at a mass grave. Say no more.

[Cornerhouse Galleries](#)

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