

## Milly Thompson



**Peer** King's Cross to Shoreditch

Milly Thompson used to be a member of the seminal, loved and loathed '90s London art collective BANK, which broke up in 2005. Her new show is loaded with all the self-consciousness of going solo, with its associated anxieties of failure, of never getting back the glory days. This might sound self-indulgent – this isn't the Beatles breaking up, is it? – but Thompson pulls off the feat of allowing these private frailties into her work, while incorporating them into a sort of public self-critique of how the artworld values the public expression of personal experience.

It's a subtle mix of melancholy, comedy and curatorial framing. Age, longing and unfulfilled desire run through them, with an implausible, disconcerting sincerity. There are strange drawings of men and women; seated as if at dinner, casting furtive glances at each other, as well as a mawkish video titled appropriately 'Basking in the melodrama of my own self-consciousness'.



*'Energy block (a curator's friend)'*

Overseeing these, and adding a further layer of self-reference, is a photo of Thompson huddled dejected under a blanket, surrounded by the paraphernalia of her studio. And there are fashionably modern geometric wall sculptures, subtitled 'a curator's friend', as if the artist had suddenly become self-confident, hip and ready for career success. Thompson's critical acuity turns on how the authentic expression of desire, hope, even failure, are always in some ways an artistic 'performance'; of how the failure of success and the success of failure are, for artists, tortuously intertwined. *JJ Charlesworth*