Over the Counter Culture

Review

Over the Counter Culture is an utter joy of an exhibition currently being presented at An Talla Solais until 19th October. For anyone engaged in thinking about Scotland’s future (and let’s face it, the figures show that’s pretty much the whole populace...) then this show is completely unmissable!

Curated by Deborah Jackson specifically for An Talla Solais, Over the Counter Culture has a fantastic array of work by a number of some of Scotland’s most engaging and eminent artists - Ross Sinclair, John Ayscough, Rachel Maclean, Stuart Murray, Rabiya Choudry and the trio Ortonandon.

There’s something for everyone here from a wall completely papered with Stuart Murray’s humorous drawings which shares the opinions of ‘The Folk Ye Bump Intae’ to the visually succulent images and short film by award-winning artist Rachel Maclean who slips in and out of history and whose work has been described as ‘cheerfully grotesque’.

A large section of the gallery has been occupied by the colourful and provocative presence of Ross Sinclair. His work has long delved into the ways in which art and politics interconnect, and it is fantastic opportunity to experience Real Life and How to Live It: Pangea. John Ayscough offers an unexpected and playful way of examining the way that Scotland’s identity is portrayed. Working with 13 and 14 year old students from Galashiels Academy and Ullapool High School, he posed a challenge inviting them to design a hat that is imbued with Scottish-ness. Four large photographic self-portraits illustrate the artist wearing millinery that spans everything from a Saltire beanie to more military-style hat. This is a thoughtful take on identity and design, and asks us to consider the question which hat would best fit ‘a new Scotland’.

This work deftly straddles Scottish culture and identity - past, present and future - and the artists navigate this rich terrain with humour and underlying serious intent. This is an extremely important body of work to have presented the Highlands and critically, this is the only place where this body of work is being shown. Make sure you see it!

Susan Christie

Independent Producer/ Curator