

GLEN SCOULLER

Bill Hare



Glen Scouller 'Hedgerow & Snowdrifts, Ayrshire' (detail), Billcliffe Gallery

It is appropriate that Glen Scouller is having this well earned commemorative exhibition at the **Billcliffe Gallery** in Glasgow. Roger Billcliffe, apart from running a successful gallery, has also long been the major champion of the founders of Scottish modernism – The Glasgow Boys. It was they more than any who set a new course in Scottish painting which is still very much with us north of the Border. Glen Scouller is one of their notable successors. "The Boys" and The Colourists quickly realised that modern painting would have to be radically different from what that art had been in the past. Instead of the previous concern with rendering material form through perspective and chiaroscuro, the new painter needed to concentrate on evoking the sensual experience and sensations of intangible elements such as light, colour, atmosphere etc. Pictures now had to be paintings. Through his dedicated career Scouller has become a master in capturing such elusive painterly effects. For his 60th birthday show the artist has produced a rich array of work from three subject sources – a recent visit to Puglia, the snow covered landscape around his studio in Ayrshire and a series of dazzling still lives of which he is a past master. Yet, irrespective of whatever subject holds his attention, the defining mark of all Scouller's dazzling painting is his consummate skill in placing each appropriate brushstroke in a perfectly harmonious

relationship to the chromatic unity of the overall pictorial image. Furthermore, Scouller appears to carry out this extremely difficult process with such eloquent ease that the only word to describe his stylistic achievement is the highest form of praise in Italian Renaissance terms – *sprezzatura!*

RICHARD HAMILTON

Pryle Behrman



Pop art is always an easy sell – all those bright-hued simulacra of our everyday surroundings – so credit to **Serpentine Gallery** (to 25 April) for mounting a retrospective of Richard Hamilton that steers clear of his sobriquet as the "Father of Pop" and focuses instead on his less crowd-pleasing political works. Titled 'Richard Hamilton: Modern Moral Matters' (echoing William Hogarth's "modern moral subjects"), the exhibition features trenchant, anti-martial pronouncements spanning more than 40 years. In some of the pieces Hamilton wears his political heart so plainly on his sleeve that there is little genuinely insightful analysis. *Shock and Awe*, 2007-8 sees Tony Blair digitally reconfigured into an all-American gunslinger standing grimly, *High Noon*-style, before a razed, apocalyptic landscape. For those opposed to Blair's wars, the picture lacks any real punch; for those in favour it could be welcomed (contrary to Hamilton's intentions of course) by making opposing views seem glib and superficial. Far more nuanced is a trio of paintings about Northern Ireland's Troubles: one depicts an Orangeman in full regalia, exuding a steely self-confidence; another shows a Republican prisoner mid-'dirty protest', surrounded by excrement but posed like Jesus; finally there is a British squaddie, pacing tentatively with insecure eyes that say "Why am I here?" and, more pertinently, "What good am I doing?"

Hamilton frequently reinterprets a resonant image in an impressive array of media and styles, as seen with a press snapshot of Mick Jagger handcuffed to art dealer Robert Fraser, shown here in no less than 10 variations. At his best, Hamilton is a master at exploring the viral power some images possess to recur endlessly and, importantly, he demonstrates how their meaning can be endlessly manipulated too.

Richard Hamilton 'The Citizen'
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