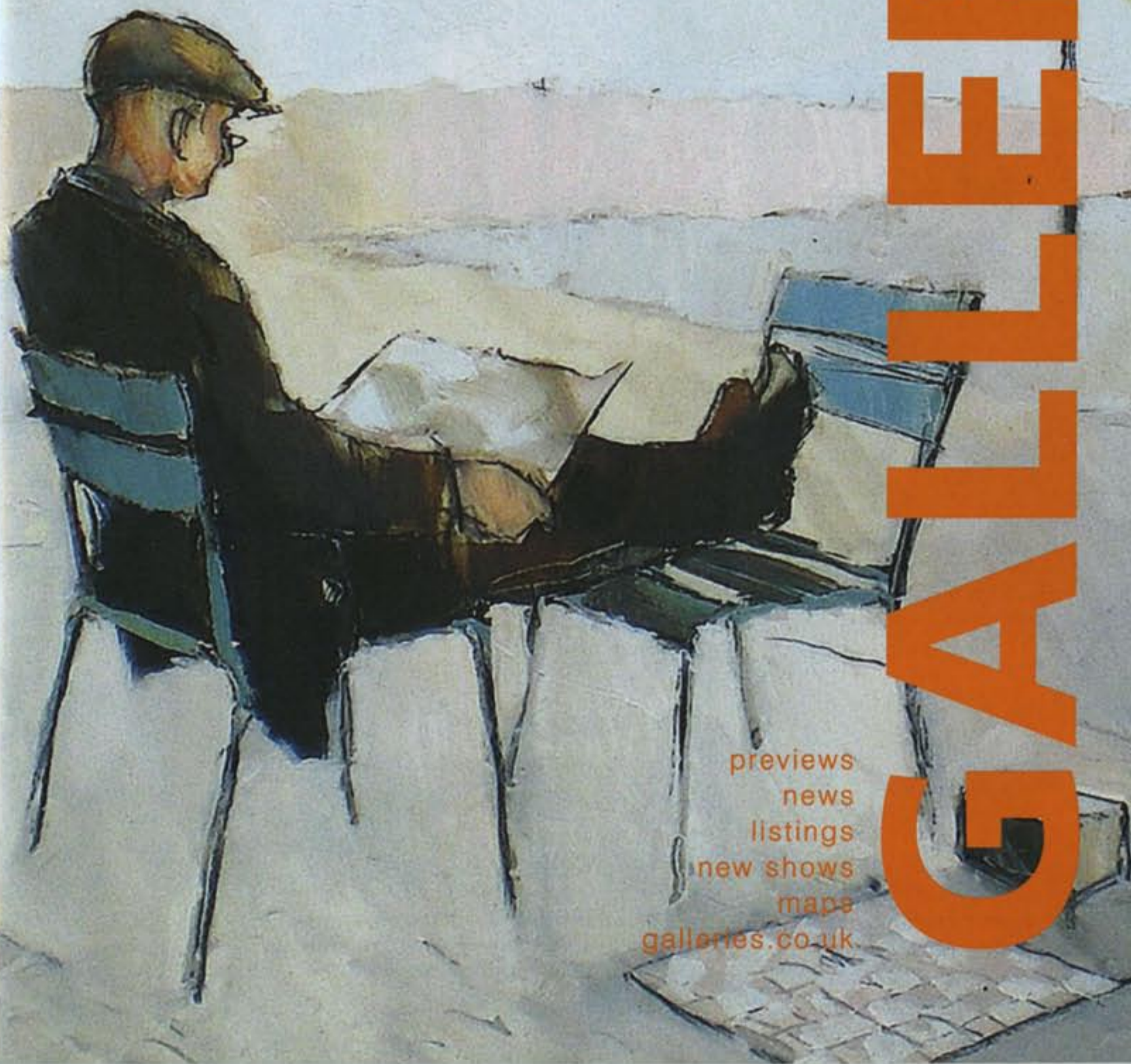


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DEL CAMPO

Michele del Campo's light-infused scenes of contemporary life are highly charged. The glamour and charm of his 20-somethings is undeniable. But there is a sense of disquiet, foreboding and alienation in the gilded perfection of face and form in his 'Close Strangers' (Mark Jason). Del Campo's flair for the human and its characterisation is matched by his ability to suggest a multitude of interpretations. His wet-in-wet brushwork is broad and relaxed.

It has been suggested that these global youth are simply too perfect, lacking in heart and soul. But the fascinating truth is that 34-year-old del Campo chooses his subjects from chance encounters with individuals on the streets of Barcelona and London. Then his complex process of refinement, photographic studies and careful editing gives rise to works of psychological and dramatic complexity. Yes, there is something of the impossibly attractive about the beach kids in *Angelic Beauty*, the long-legged girls in *The Consolation* and the couple in *The Coming Storm*. But isn't that just what contrasts with their sadness and longing – a new generation who cannot find fulfilment and comfort? Gorgeousness is offset in one such mood painting by empty cardboard boxes; in others gritty graffiti and brick walls do the job.

Corinna Lotz

TRIPLE VISION



VAN DER BEEK

Entitled 'Out of Old Mythologies', sculptor Deborah van der Beek's new exhibition at the **Victoria Art Gallery**, with its intensely modelled bronzes like *Ned Kelly* or *Don Quixote II*, does indeed touch on timeless themes, investing her animals and trademark Marin-esque horse-riders with metamorphic and symbolic richness. She is interested in the victim, the fugitive, the outlaw or those sidelined by social norms. The romantic cult of the outsider, however, pertinently gives way, in *Fifth Horseman* or *The World Gone Pear-Shaped* to still broader generic content – the former a centaur impregnated, Paolozzi-style, with collaged detritus (e.g. mobile phones and computer wires), the latter embodying a bite-sized cavity. Concerns about pollution and over-population are the implicit themes here.

As in the work of Frink, either the male or the forlorn horse, bull or dog dominates; the modelling is, though, almost Giacometti-like in its intensity, the spindly, reduced forms and craggy, pitted surfaces speaking of ravished vulnerability, yet at the same time opened up to surrounding space and light. Ambitious and well-informed, van der Beek is one to watch as she replaces a pressing post-war existential sensibility with an ecological one.

Peter Davies

Deborah van der Beek 'Ned Kelly III'



MONKS

More than anything else John Monks' recent oils (**Long and Ryle**) give the sensation of time passing. There is an awareness of intrigue and the physical time built into their making. He describes how the sometimes frustrating – even infuriating – process of making them can reveal deeply submerged things. "You have an idea, but what you actually make often goes into a different direction, so that what you make is something new when those processes come together successfully." The energy needed to resolve this conflict endows Monks' works with a powerful emotional thrust.

His interiors portray just those mysterious "airs, detached from the body of the wind (the house was ramshackle after all) [that] crept round corners and ventured indoors" evoked by Virginia Woolf. Time as an abstraction becomes physically present in big canvases with complex layers, colours and planes. Ghostly lines draw us through doorways to enfilades of empty rooms like stage sets or a cinematic experience in which we enter another dimension in time and space. It is a world both imaginary and immediately palpable. The application of paint, often by means of a palette knife, gives the pigments a floated-on feeling in which space is both here and not here.

Corinna Lotz

John Monks 'House II'

Michele del Campo 'Docks', 2009