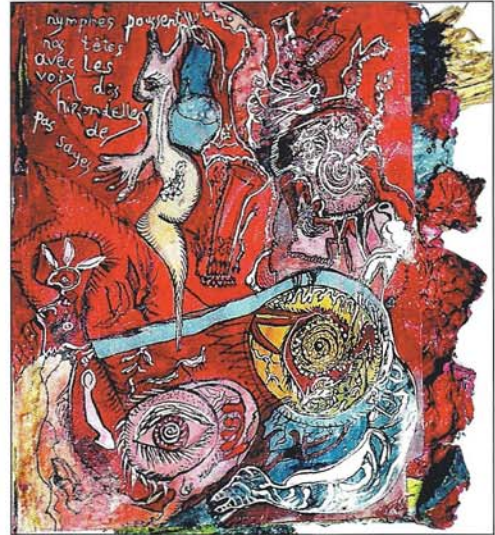


ODY SABAN: LA MAISON ENCHANTÉE

Espace Lucrèce, Paris, January 9–February 7, 2008

Espace Lucrèce is a courageous little gallery, almost like a co-operative, somewhat off the beaten track, but well worth supporting. This was a fascinating show because it included such a wide range of Saban's work: assemblages from her squat period, costumes from performances, transformed roots and rocks and other objects, as well as a rare showing of several of her spectacular 'books'. The latter consist of half-a dozen loosely bound pages with reliefs and intensely coloured images that have a poetic and actually magical (or therapeutic) function. Naturally there was some variation in their aesthetic quality, but the show conveyed a wonderful sense of the radiant sensuality and emotional expression we associate with Saban. Because of her Turkish-Jewish origins and her dramatic (and often painful) adventures in the West, her work crosses cultural and religious boundaries in ways that are truly exciting and worth some effort in understanding. This show in particular demonstrates her remarkable ability to infuse a wild and yet authentic life into whatever she comes across: a lavishly decorated apron, for example, has a whole story of an unknown dead woman's belongings behind it and is a deeply touching imaginative recreation of her life. But most of the works have their own vivid life and this is all the more poignant when we try to imagine the constant struggle for this particular creative spirit to survive.

David Maclagan



JOSEF HOFER: CORPS À CORPS

Objet Trouvé, Paris, January 11–February 16, 2008.

Josef Hofer is Austrian and lives in an institution. Both his work, and the context in which it is created give it a similar quality to some of the best that Gugging produces. He was born deaf and dumb, communicates by signing and touching, and works closely with an assistant; but this makes him plough his own furrow all the more obstinately (for example, he dismissed a book of Schiele's work she brought in to show him). Like Schiele, Hofer has a mirror in his room via which he tries out poses and engages in a kind of dialogue with himself (or his image), and the resulting visual discourse has a narcissistic, sexualised flavour. His work confronts us, just as he confronts himself in the mirror, as if posing an unanswerable question. His drawings are strictly bounded: figures seemingly caught in *flagrante delicto* twist and writhe within 'frames' over which Hofer often spends more time than on what they contain. Their tense, awkward poses, and the emphatic reinforcement of what protects or confines them (I think of Kafka's note 'My fortress; my prison cell.') give his work an uncomfortable intensity, but one that is, I think, not without humour and occasional playfulness. But it would be a mistake to see him as entirely cut off from the outside world: far from it, an unusual 'bird's eye' view of a landscape was inspired by a flight in a light aircraft (before he actually flew to the USA). He is also addicted to playstation games, and it's possible that some of his imagery also derives from them. Within its insistent limits, this is powerful and impressive work, giving me a strong sense of someone engaged in a determined struggle to assert his existence.

David Maclagan

RED: WORKS BY ANTHONY JADUNATH

Novas Contemporary Urban Centre, London, February 15–March 15, 2008.

This first exhibition of Anthony Jadunath's work for some years was a fitting tribute to his powerful and at times disturbing constructions and carvings. With Red as the theme and predominant colour in his sometimes bloody works, often portraying death and murder, Jadunath certainly has a style which is all his own. Much of his work is autobiographical and reflects some of the trials he has had to bare in his own life, as well as relating to other violent incidents that have happened around him or in the greater world, ranging from local attacks to mass murder by governments. His wooden carvings and reliefs are sometimes embellished with burning or barbed wire, which all adds to their powerful effect. His faces and figures are half cartoon and half terror – an unsettling combination. Jadunath, who was born in Trinidad in 1945, has been living and working in London for many years and the Novas Gallery are to be congratulated for organising this rare look at an important Outsider.

John Maizels

