

**JAM, Emma Hart at Cell Project Space  
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1,000 Words**

At Cell Project Space Emma Hart’s work confronts you as soon as you enter, requiring you to abide and view a small monitor on a plinth in a space by the door. ‘Dice’, 2009 is easily digestible, a simple and colourful short film in which the artists’ one free hand (the other is gripping the HD camera that we also see through) repeatedly releases a bright red dice onto a beach just at the point where the tide will roll it over without engulfing it.

Hence the artist plays a game of chance with the ocean. This could seem a grand, ponderous, perhaps Nietzschean gesture and yet the regular intervention of the artist’s voice –which is young, esturine, girly (I’m told Hart is from Croydon) – is picked up live by the camera’s built-in mic. This reclaims the filmed act from philosophy and frames it as more modest and everyday play. Nevertheless grandiose implications are not entirely defeated, after all, the child was Nietzsche’s ultimate hero. The artist’s voice is in fact crucial. Not only does it makes clear that she is playing as much as gambling, it helps to invoke the innocent dramas of our first encounters with the sea in a way that attunes the work to a political and psychological register while revealing something that the artist has left slightly beyond her control.

The HD technological revolution continues to liberate artists by visibly sanctioning and legitimating increasingly casual and quotidian events. Lighting and editing now often

seem superfluous to the possibilities of a medium that can pass-on spontaneous image-making with extreme clarity. In 'Dice' – as elsewhere in this show – we have a distinctly hand-held feeling along with unscripted vocal interjections which create a cool or street-credible art to challenge established values of preceding generations (consider here the relatively sedentary art films of Bill Viola.) When technology supports image-making as assuredly as HD we're consequently able to relax, shoot our cameras from the hip and make art chewing gum with one hand tied behind our backs.

Upstairs at Cell you pass through a purposefully disorientating passage created by the installation of a screen and emerge into a darkened space from behind the film (titled 'Lost' 2009-11) that you are about to spend half an hour viewing. As you watch, a banal narrative tugs at your innate curiosity (or downright nosiness.) The film could be titled *The Famous Five Go Foraging in a Grimy Flat* as it shows a group of house-sharers, archaeologically exploring a home that they are perhaps about to vacate after a few years of working and playing so hard that it left no time for cleaning.

We follow their explorations, again through the eyepiece of a hand-held HD camera, assisted now and then by a torch, into nooks and crannies, beneath beds, behind radiators, on top of kitchen cupboards and in places for which there is no name but all of which seem pretty filthy, chaotic and unpleasant. HD and its zooming, macro eye provide a forensic, hi-tec quality to the domestic archaeology and enhance a narrative otherwise so dull it could make us walk away. But it occasionally culminates in little moments of triumph when something of significance is discovered, even if it is only old nail clippers

or long-lost sunglasses. Then we see hands enter the frame, grasping these finds and dragging them back into circulation from historical obscurity. These moments are also gilded with the sound of ecstatic young voices, captured on built-in mic in moments of infectious celebration that posterity might treasure, like throwaway snapshots we never throw away. As a result, the audience vicariously – and somewhat ludicrously- shares in the strange pleasures of this low-life taxonomy and arcane archaeology.

The show is admirably clarified by its precise design and crisp installation and Hart's third and final piece - 'Car-Crash', 2011 – is hosted by a smaller, brighter space upstairs where a series of light-box-mounted colour photographic transparencies are hung in a conventionally spaced row. Each records what at first seems no more than a café tabletop spread for an ongoing meal. It takes a peek at the title to clue-in that the reason one or two objects on the tables are oddly or precisely juxtaposed is that, during conversations about car-crashes the artist recorded moments when her guests reached for available paraphernalia to demonstrate what their words could not quite describe. The way these works are staged, selected, framed and presented seems to introduce different values into the artist's work. Now we don't hear the artist's chatty voice, but still sense its presence. A similar close-up detail resulting from hi-tec photographic imagery is apparent, but here more consciously institutionalised as 'art'. And yet another kind of game has been played, albeit by hands we no-longer see.

Throughout history new technologies have allowed artists to engage more spontaneously with the everyday, thereby drawing-out underlying meanings and messages from

momentary and spontaneous acts and accidents. Generations of artists have used new-found immediacies to ease or discard burdens of previous generations who may have pursued similar themes according to other forms influenced by different media. Hart's show at Cell Project Space illustrates that strategies of translation and archaeology currently supplant values of invention or innovation and that underlying forms in our works, arising from the media we use to produce them, guide and enthuse us today more than the over-rated, contrived and all-too-conscious 'content' over which we once obsessed. Today our hands and eyes are led into inhuman games of chance and discovery by technology that has become a second nature

**END**