

Julian Göthe
Sorcha Dallas
Glasgow, UK

‘The family that lays together stays together’, Robert Crumb once wrote. It is with similar breezy indifference that Julian Göthe forces historical families of object making into incestuous cohabitation. The tracery of black metalwork in his pieces, two of which were included in his show ‘Beams Are Gonna Find Me’ at Sorcha Dallas, recalls all manner of schools of design and architecture. The troubled democracy of these combinations seems to sit surprisingly comfortably with a knowing aesthetic; the horrible design that one might find in a fashionable club is part of Göthe’s mission to tease. It all seems like artful politeness on the surface and then the repetition of forms and the odd subject matter jolt you from reading them as mere hip stylizations. His assimilation of the big movements (surrealism and abstraction seem to be among his favourites) into this world of interior design provides an opportunity for Göthe to create his oddly weighted pairings, feathers with metal or wood with paper.

The modified and sculpted body occurs often. Göthe takes the glistening bodies of muscle beach and transposes them to the less sympathetic climes of northern Europe. In *Walls Talk* (2005, made with Anje Stöfler Hamad and screened at the opening), the uniform perma-tan is removed by shaky photocopying, the perfect bodies develop new scratches and bumps, their flesh mottled like statues. These images are juxtaposed with structural detail; bodies and landscapes merge, muscle bound legs become feats of structural engineering and buildings become anthropomorphic kings and queens.

In the smaller of the two halves of the gallery the bodybuilder’s dainty pins reappear in *Smashing* (2006), in which a black frame houses a mirrored black mass descending to two tottering limbs. The confines of the space pit this shiny crab man against an alarming looking cabinet that levitates above the floor. Like a car cruising the strip this piece of furniture seems to have been tackled by MTV’s Pimp My Ride vehicle modification experts and appears to barely touch the wall by virtue of glowing neon back lights in an incongruous blue colour.

By luck or by design it is several things at once, ornate spiral columns give way to a pointed ecclesiastical top. Göthe has adorned his find with some of his geometric paper constructions as well as his custom car lights. The result is to give it a quality it previously didn’t possess. Gazing in through glassless openings the shapes appear as odd treasures. In Werner Herzog’s *Herz aus Glas* (1976) a girl under hypnosis is asked to describe the contents of an ornate cabinet filled with ruby glass, ‘here’s a church made of glass, animals live in the church’, she murmurs, Göthe similarly is toying with making these folds and points defy a description of what they appear to be. It is a well-devised use of the space that might look a little anaemic if everything were more demure in scale or else if the various gravity-defying pieces got to touch the floor with their wonky feet.

As if lifted to some arbitrary high watermark, signs of civilisation have drifted up to this unreal space. J.G Ballards’ characters in *The Drowned World* (1962) continue to sip Martinis in the stifling heat of their flooded surroundings, where Paul Delvaux paintings hang above the mantelpiece abstracted from the rest of an art history that was lost in the flood. In *Walls Talk* we get a letterbox view out onto this topsy turvy world. With no sense of hierarchy the viewpoint spins across prints and photocopies all rendered

a grey mid tone; we swim over bodybuilder's bottoms and then down the street of some utopian project. Spiralling computerised lines unfurl like weeds. These swirling lines never show you where they emanate from, sometimes coming across like some demented Ferris wheel and at other times, due to the heavy pixilation, like a steel cable yanking back and forth.

Göthe frequently speaks about stage shows and showgirls and the dark jollity of these partially humanised creations are very much like body builders or cancan girls. In previous works these have stepped out into the floor but at Sorcha Dallas they all stick to the confines of the wall as if waiting backstage. They are self-conscious and sassy, sculptural renditions of Ballard's gin swigging, art-loving, jungle temptress.

Mick Peter