

Israeli soldiers, no Israeli checkpoints and roadblocks, no “by-pass” roads), what song would you listen to?’ The resulting soundtrack is filled with musical treasures that span the gamut from ballads to angst-ridden rock numbers, from western to Arabic musicians.

As we listen to the religious fervour of Egyptian vocalist Umm Kulthum and the nationalistic verve in the music of Lebanese singer Fairuz, these songs help the artist appropriate Texas not only as part of Palestine but also as part of the Arab diaspora. By acting as a conduit for her people to roam freely, *From Texas With Love* ends up being a paean not only for freedom but also for reconciliation. Listening to this, as I stared out onto the open Texan road, I found myself having to suppress an urge to weep. Jacir’s piece isn’t merely about exile, but equally about the double tension of living as one with your colonisers. I imagine that it is no great coincidence that the artist chose the oil-rich Texan landscape as an allegory for US imperialism and its damaging influence on the everyday lives of Palestinian people.

For those who feel overburdened by this melancholy, the exhibition also contains more playful gestures, such as Ian Hamilton Finlay’s *Nude/Draped Nude*, 1980, a print that compares a warship and its camouflage to a nude figure with drapery. Having said that, I left wishing that the rest of the displays could have been as beguiling as that of Jacir, who manages to achieve so much with so little. Still, ‘Unsettled Objects’ is a powerful example of a human rights exhibition. Without being overly moralistic, it offers an intimate insight into the victims of human rights injustice, and offers audiences the opportunity to broker their own relationship with their personal conflicts. ■

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Cornered Rooms

Waterside Project Space London

3 September to 17 October

A corner, wrote Gaston Bachelard in *The Poetics of Space*, is ‘the germ of a room’. Where two planes meet, we can just about shelter our minds and bodies. We know where we are, decidedly fixed, not outside, lurching around in space. And yet, as Annabelle von Girsewald considers in the exhibition ‘Cornered Rooms’ at Waterside Project Space, since Bachelard was writing, perhaps we have developed a fear of corners. Taking a lead from Stephan Trüby’s 2008 book *Exit – Architecture: Design Between War and Peace*, von Girsewald suggests that the notion of being inside, and, moreover, being cornered, are more fearful propositions to us now – post-9/11 – and that contemporary architecture places a renewed emphasis on exit strategies and lines of flight. Are we all now like those highly trained operatives – Jason Bourne comes to mind – who note the exits as soon as they enter a room?

‘Cornered Rooms’ begins with a corner, a steel navy blue sculpture of a solid 90° angle suspended in the air by Hreinn Fridfinnsson, an Icelandic artist well known for his poetic investigations into concepts of space and time. The sculpture, *Bláhorn*, 2010, has a symbol on each end – an image of the infinity sign – one embossed and one imprinted. With such spare means, Fridfinnsson creates the possibility that this corner could meet its pair somewhere in space, creating an impossibly infinite square. Those infinity signs could, but never would, slot neatly into one another. The sculpture is also, however (and perhaps this is the particular joy of it), a ‘you are here’ moment that allows viewers to imagine themselves as a tiny ‘x’ on the map of infinity.

A fellow Icelander, Egill Sæbjörnsson, has also created an installation that hinges on the limits of possibility. A group of plain white boxes of different sizes sit in one of Waterside’s warehouse-like corners, though they are enlivened by a meticulous film projection. This allows the viewer to see, as though enchanted, the boxes opening and then shutting (with a loud musical click), revealing, at one point, a banana that flies out of the box and around the room. Occasionally the boxes leave their earthly mundanity to fly around the space like ghosts, untethered by gravity or geometry, and changing shape mid-air using Escher-like tricks of perspective. Karim Noureldin, meanwhile, activates the corners of the space with the wall painting *sunset*, 2010, which consists of dark, angular paintings that extended like chevrons from corners of the gallery, reminiscent of emergency exit signs.

One of the most evocative pieces in the exhibition is the one that seems the simplest intervention. Damien Roach’s sound work *Rain*, 2010, plays the noise of raindrops on a tin roof around the gallery space. This is a common sort of sound and has its own poetry, its own musicality, but it is hard to underestimate how strongly we connect this sound to the idea of safety. It is not uncommon to hear someone say how much they love the sound of rain when they are listening to it from the safety of inside, just as one might like to listen to the howling wind when wrapped up warm by a fire, but the pleasure in this sound is felt only from the inside-out rather than the outside-in. When you are out in the driving rain, getting soaked to the skin, you can’t hear the sound of your quiet warm house calling to you with its sounds of safety. This sound, then, of the weather outside as heard from inside, is, in fact, the music of the interior, the sound of being inside.

Anna Ostoya’s contribution to the exhibition is spread out in the space and also spread a little thinly in terms of mixed media and mixed metaphors. An abstract angular painting, *A sense of perspective and other attempts*, 2008, purports to be an abstraction of a news image situated in a box elsewhere in the space: a child living on a rubbish dump. There is little, in reality, to connect the two. A beige triangular table stands in another corner, on which sits a beaten-up ghetto blaster covered in the same lifeless shade of paint, on which you can hear a description of the city of Leonia from Italo Calvino’s 1972 book

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