

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

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Anthea Hamilton's first exhibition with Thomas Dane confirms that she has lost none of her powers of disquieting transformation since her Duveens project at the Tate Britain last year. This involved gourd-headed performers lolling and posing in a gridded white tiled terrain dotted with historical sculpture from Tate's collection. Two years before she had exhibited a giant pair of buttocks just nearby when she was shortlisted for the 2016 Turner Prize. Now Hamilton has filled both Dane's Duke Street galleries with more richly associative, mysteriously evocative work under the umbrella title of *The Prude*, apparently inspired by the priggish character of Cecil Vyse in EM Forster's *A Room with A View*.

The aesthete in Cecil Vyse might have appreciated Hamilton's single walnut sculpture of a Walnut Wavy Wizenad Boot up in Dane's first floor spaces where it is set against a backdrop of walls covered in grids of fake fur the colours of a Battenburg cake. But it is debatable what he would have made of the coolly erotic procession of photographs (made in collaboration with Colombian artist Carlos Maria Romero and choreographer Lewis Ronald) arranged along walls papered with gridded monochrome tartan wallpaper in which a naked young man elegantly interacts with the furniture of a mid-century interior.

In the other street-level space there are more odd encounters with a giant photographically realistic digitally printed fabric moth and peacock butterfly set against a backdrop of walls emblazoned with orange giant daisies and a huge galumphing Robert Crumb goddess. Chairs and screens made from printed tiles and brushed stainless steel further choreograph a dazzling environment which, at the opening last Thursday, the Whitechapel Gallery's chief curator Lydia Yee observed makes butterflies of us all as we negotiate and settle on all these elements.

It is testament to the admiration that Hamilton inspires amongst her peers that at the opening there were a great many artists doing just that, with Prem Sahib, Caragh Thuring, Paul Maheke and George Henry Longley among the throng. However arguably the most butterfly-like was the Argentinean hotelier Alan Faena who, clad in his trademark Stetson hat, floated through with dealer Ivor Braka and Braka's supermodel wife Kirsten McMenemy. Faena's Miami Beach hotel complex is stuffed with art, most notably with a giant Damien Hirst gilded skeleton of a woolly mammoth installed on its ocean front. So who knows, maybe some wavy boots or giant butterflies might soon be wending their way south?

Anthea Hamilton is also one of the 79 artists included in *May you Live in Interesting Times*, Ralph Rugoff's curated show for this year's Venice Biennale which he says will "respond to the precarious times we are living in", with art that is "multivalent," and "richly ambiguous" and could generate many associations—all qualities Hamilton's work has in spades. Speaking at the Italian Cultural Institute on Friday, Rugoff also revealed that he has eschewed any overarching theme in favour of restructuring the biennale format into two distinct exhibitions—one in the Arsenale and one in the International Pavilion—with all participating artists showing work in each venue. According to Rugoff, this bifurcated biennale reflects a divided social reality as well as offering a deeper representation of what can often be very various artistic practice. Another key fact is that for the first time in its history 50% of the artists showing at the biennale are women. It was therefore especially appropriate that these announcements—as well as Hamilton's show opening to the public—all took place on International Women's Day.

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