

Time Out

London's weekly guide

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BUT CAN CAMPBELL CUT IT
AS AUTHOR, ACTRESS AND SINGER?**

Complete
8-day
TV
guide





Bridget Riley

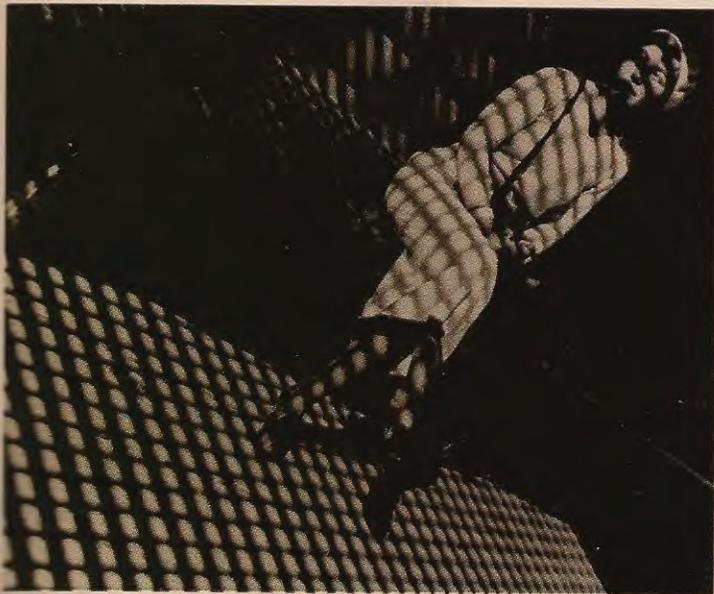
TATE

'Fall' is still as scintillating as when it was painted in 1963. Parallel black and white lines cascade down the canvas in tightening curves, like flowing hair. The sensation of depth – of the canvas bulging and indenting – and of movement down and across the surface are both strong. Where the lines are close, colour is also generated – mainly green, but prismatic colours also flicker on the periphery of vision. You could regard it simply as an optical game but, even so, it is surprisingly vibrant. Three of the six paintings on show emphatically transcend this definition. 'Achaian' (1981) is my favourite. Vertical stripes of turquoise, ochre, blue, salmon pink, black and white seem to be arranged intuitively, without a system. The edges are turquoise and blue respectively

which gives the picture an open-sided airiness. Yet it has autocratic assurance, a feeling of inevitability, mixed with an enduring freshness and sense of surprise. In 'Late Morning' (1968) narrow stripes of red, green and blue flank bands of white. The painting is wider than one's field of vision, so it be-

comes an enveloping vista. The green and red merge optically to infuse the surface with a glow of yellow light.

In 'To a Summer's Day' (1980) softly coloured bands – ochre, pink, lilac and blue – thread together like ribbons to form gently undulating horizontal waves like the surface of a gently rolling sea. Riley maintains that associations with the natural world are vital to the work. This may explain why 'Deny II' (1967), grey ellipses of varying tone on a uniform grey ground, does not fire the imagination; it seems too cerebral, too much like an exercise. 'Nataraja' (1993) one of the paintings shown at the Hayward, is also without magic. Insistent diagonals and verticals confine the colours in a patchwork of small parallelograms. There are more colours – apricot, raspberry pink, ochre, several greens, blue, magenta and pinkish red – but much less vibrancy. They sit dully on the surface, too factual and too flat. Magic is hard to sustain over 30 years. *Sarah Kent*



Alexander Rodchenko

WOODLANDS

As those heady days of early Soviet art. 'We must revolutionise our thinking,' exclaimed Alexander Rodchenko, using his considerable talents mostly in the service of the State. This small Arts Council touring show demonstrates just one of his abilities, photography. Among the painting, fashion, designs for the stage and even sweet wrappers it was the photography that offered the opportunity for a real artistic revolution. When he first bought a Leica he left it on the table as an object for the family to venerate before he dared to load the film.

Photography offered 'unprecedented moments of movement, of people, of animals and cars'. In practice it meant dramatic foreshortening, vertiginous viewpoints and strong diagonals. Anything in fact, but the 'navel shot' which

really pissed him off. Rodchenko fulminated against the practice of photographing modern architecture fully frontal when it was usually encountered at street level, rearing upwards. So he shot from below, or above; trees, buildings, crowds. So much so that correspondence in photography journals complained about the proliferation of the photo à la Rodchenko.

Nowadays his stylistic mannerisms may be no big deal, but he took great photos. Most interesting is the way he pictured people in relation to their environment. His wife and fellow Constructivist, Varvara Stepanova, peers through a gauze to an unseen light source that dapples her face. The same dappling imposes a soft geometry on the 'Girl with Leica'. In a 1930s Soviet festival, six gymnasts stand rigidly to attention, forming the spokes of a wheel; happy to be little cogs in the larger machine. Headly days indeed. *Mark Currah*

Allan deSouza and Yong Soon Min

CAMERAWORK

The anthropologist's life isn't what it was. How can you go native when the natives won't stay native any more and refuse to pose, bone-through-nose, with the kindly ethnographer for one last, paternalistic snapshot for *National Geo-*



Simon Biggs

TRUMANS BREWERY

Enter the darkened space, and a celluloid angel Gabriel flashes up on screen. Move closer and as one's shadow edges into the frame, you are addressed by four identical men chanting a mantra of body parts. In another work, the viewer's movements set in motion a series of nightmarish images which rise from the body of a sleeping hermaphrodite. Welcome to the world of Simon Biggs and his 'interactive environmental projections'.

The technology is impressive; it draws on advances in Artificial Intelligence, Virtual Reality and interactive systems. Put simply, animations are generated from audio and visual footage

graphic? Allan deSouza and Yong Soon Min's installation is an exploration of this most problematic of disciplines, focussing on the triangular relationship between the anthropologist, the 'primitive' and the native 'informant' who mediates between one culture and another. Participants in such *miseaux* are caught in roles they cannot choose. The artists, assuming the double role of native and informant, have begun to conduct a little research of their own, and the first part of this discursive show is a textual illustration of the fraught roles the participants play in this dangerous game of cultures.

A structure somewhere between the native hut and the researcher's tent stands on a dirt floor in a darkened room. The end walls are papered with the covers of books by Levi-Strauss and Margaret Mead, and coffee table tomes with titles like 'My Life with the Head-hunters'. The tented roof of the structure is decorated with printed photos – Gauguin with his Tahitian models, Leni Riefenstahl holding hands with her Nubian 'boyfriend' and other assorted colonialists with their exotic finds. The faces, in negative, of indigenous peoples surround the room. Who, one asks, is studying whom, and why? A complex slide presentation provides a coda to the exhibition: it shows the artists at large in LA, a town in pressing need of a little ethnological study. *Adrian Searle*

which are manipulated on a Macintosh computer; once installed, video sensors detect the viewer's movements and cause the screen image to interact. But how successful is Biggs beyond the hi-tech gimmickry? Gender-bending, childhood and the body appear to be favoured leitmotifs in his six works. They map out, with varying degrees of success, reflections on identity, memory and fragmentation, but fail to touch upon the spectator's persistent sense of being under surveillance. As I peered into the blinding glare of the projectors trying to glimpse the artist concealed behind, the Wizard of Oz sprung to mind and his gleeful intimidation of Dorothy and co, using a cheap bag of tricks. Hard-core wireheads might not be so fazed. *Tania Guha*

'All Change: Russian Avant-Garde Books 1912-1934'

BRITISH MUSEUM

When curated well, art historical exhibitions can transport the viewer back in time, bringing to life the ideas and characters that shaped an era. Disappointingly, 'All Change: Russian Avant-Garde Books 1912-1934' illuminates this fascinating epoch in Russia's history with the enthusiasm of a traffic warden reciting parking laws.

The exhibition is divided into three sections. The Futurist books of 1912-1916 were virtually hand-made and now look as frail and dejected as old hippies. Look out for 'Tango with Cows' (1914) which is printed on garish wallpaper and has a 'chewed-off' corner. The section devoted to books from the Revolutionary Years is dominated by propaganda. Best are Vladimir Mayakovsky's cartoon-style covers designed to combat mass illiteracy. His drawings of heroes (sailors, Red Army soldier, worker, laundress) are turgid compared with the villains (general, banker, Kulak, priest) – Mayakovsky was a talented caricaturist rather than a political zealot.

The highlight is a collection of Constructivist magazines which are displayed in a reconstruction of Rodchenko's Soviet Workers Club of 1925. The photomontages and typography featured on the covers of *LEF* could easily hold their own against the



current designer darlings, *Raygun* and *Emigré*. But, deprived of a chance to leaf through their pages and starved of related material such as contemporary paintings, films, sculptures and set designs, the viewer's attention span is tested beyond the call of duty. *Tania Guha*