



Niklas Schechinger and Hank Schmidt van der Beek, 'Surf Champ Series', 2006, installation view, Lightbox

Los Angeles

## St Mungo and Me

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LightBox, camera, action! 'I think I'm going to start off the evening - playing songs. And then I'm going to build it up,' explains Nick McCarthy, lead guitarist of Franz Ferdinand and curator of LightBox Gallery's new show, *St Mungo and Me*, of the grandiose events in store for attendees on opening night. In many ways, the opening would prove to be the exhibition itself, an evening of art and music, 'a great combination', in McCarthy's words, that would stand alone as the soul of the show. It was his attempt to recreate a piece of the Glasgow Art scene in Los Angeles's popular art district of La Cienega.

For his 2006 Los Angeles curatorial debut, McCarthy hand-selected artists from both scenes, a theme fundamental to *St Mungo and Me*, as was his personal acquaintance with each artist. 'This is basically a mix of artists I met in Munich and people from the Glasgow scene,' he explained. 'They're all extremely funny and intelligent characters... I picked them because of that, as well as their work.'

Several of the artists created pieces on arrival in Los Angeles. The installation 'Surf Champ Series', 2006, by Niklas Schechinger and Hank Schmidt van der Beek, both from Germany, is a highlight of the show. A series of 22 paintings, based on a 1976 'Surf Champ' pinball machine, it documents players' names and their impressive (or not so impressive) scores in the titles of each work. Schechinger and van der Beek explained the players were the artists and they were merely the translators of their art.

In contrast, Shana Moulton performed in her 2006 piece, 'Whispering Pines 6,7,8', a

thoughtful yet humorous video installation, revealing New Age woman Cynthia's personal anxieties and inner confusion between fantasy and reality - the last of her eight part series on the character. Jo Robertson's paintings, 'The blue windows behind the stars, where's my girlfriend gone', 2006, and 'It's better playing at play school than playing at home', 2006, were based on themes of simplicity. 'I try to find a direct way from the inside to the outside,' she says.

Ultimately, each artist became a character in McCarthy's ode to the Glasgow art scene. A true performer, he admitted: 'I'm a sucker for showbiz.' With a sizable crowd at the opening, the God Bearing Sisters, a band made up of McCarthy and the eight featured artists, performed in the gallery's parking lot, sparking a light, fun and pop accumulation of music and poetry, rivalling the best in street music. Those who made it inside the 5,000 square-foot space were treated to paintings by Robertson, Lucy Stein and Celia Hempton, video installations by Moulton and Anna Witt, the installation by Schechinger and Schmidt van der Beek, and drawings by Manuela Gernedal, each piece just as if transferred from a Glasgow School of Art degree show.

With a roster of international artists and a lively performance element, this attempt to capture a touch of the Glasgow scene, described as having a ramshackle, 11th-hour quality, succeeds on a micro-scale - a portion of artistic haggis for the Los Angeles masses. 'I'm a musician, really, not an art critic,' says McCarthy. But was it really enough to get the audience chanting the words of St Mungo, 'Let Glasgow Flourish'?

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