



Enrico David
Musical moment 2
Gouache and Collage on Paper.
2006-2007
48 cm x 48cm
Courtesy of the artist and Cabinet, London
© 2007 Enrico David



Enrico David
Shitty Tantrum: on the eve of our kabuki play, I
consol my boyfriend for running out of ideas
Gouache and Collage on Paper.
2006-2007
48 cm x 48cm
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Enrico David

Italian-born artist, Enrico David is one of the most exciting artists working in Britain today. Last month, his first major solo exhibition *Ultra Paste* opened at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. Since moving to the UK in the late 1980s, David has spent the last 20 years cultivating a powerful presence in the contemporary arts scene. After studying at Central St Martin's College during the 1990s, David began his artistic development with a small solo exhibition of large scale embroidered canvases at The Approach, followed shortly by an acclaimed group exhibition in 2001 at the Saatchi Gallery.

Enrico David's latest work differs from his earlier needlework exhibits largely through his expansion into different artistic mediums. This exhibition marks the evolution of David's style, which has grown exponentially as different qualities of his work have come to the foreground

in recent years. Photography, sculpture and installation art are among the featured exhibits and even those people unfamiliar with Enrico David's work will be immediately struck by the variance of the exhibition. The show itself is spilt into two separate levels; downstairs is a self-curated retrospective of some of his finest work of the past five years, upstairs contains two installation pieces, one of which created especially for the ICA and is the first solo curation of a show at the venue for Mark Sladen, the ICA's new Exhibition Director.

Sladen has overseen the development of an original diorama — based in part on a Surrealist photo-collage from 1935 by Dora Maar, a Croatian photographer made famous as the mistress and muse to Pablo Picasso. David readdresses the focus of Maar's original piece to create a truly personal experience. The panelled green diorama is evocative of David's childhood; it

is reminiscent of the bedroom designed for him by his father. Despite the clear division of medium between the two separate gallery spaces, there is a continued sense of theatricality between the two. The exhibition co-ordinator, Silvia Tramontana, points out that "the downstairs gallery works as a sort of casting session for the upstairs." David was able to curate the retrospective section himself has resulted in a cohesive and accurate representation of his previous work, he notes, "when possible it is very important to be able to control how my work is displayed."

Although perhaps less carnivalesque than his previous works, Enrico David's most recent collection of pieces is no less theatrical. David uses black and white photography, a medium he had not experimented with before, to represent a mock theatre performance. The continuing sense of fake theatricality is a recurring



Enrico David
My fat friend
Gouache and Collage on Paper.
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Enrico David
Interior
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2006-2007
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dramatic element of his work. "Recurring themes emerge whenever I want to highlight a particular element of my work," says David. The use of effigy, masks and the symbolism of mother and child are among some of the most recurrent aspects of his art. Theatre triggers subjects to reveal their true characteristics, which are a natural partner to artistic expression; "it is a logical expression to mimic theatrical content in the form of photographs." David has always shown a fascination with masquerade, it seems that the elements of the unknown are the most compelling, generating the notion that truth is a truly subjective concept.

Enrico David's artistic influences are as extensive as his creative output; he usually begins each piece by making a drawing and finding images or texts that arouse his imagination. "Sometimes my inspiration for a piece can evolve from a conversation or a film, it is really very wide-ranging." The

evocative images conjured in David's work often represents a powerful narrative, yet David stresses that this is rarely a conscious action. The work entitled *Shitty Tantrum* is a powerful collective series of twenty-three gouaches, which are a type of heavily pigmented watercolour painting. Although each gouache constitutes a small part of a narrative framework, they are equally impressive and wholly appreciated as stand-alone images. "The narrative element is something which develops from an original idea, it evolves as a natural growth from within the work itself."

Instead of referencing any great masters as an influence to his work, David cites his contemporary and some-time collaborator the filmmaker Bonnie Camplin as a great influence upon his artistic output. "We have a strong relationship in many respects, I find her work inspiring and reassuring."

David's plans for the future include

another solo show, this time in Cologne at the Buchholz Gallery as well as his inclusion in a touring exhibition of the best Italian Art of the past 40 years. Enrico David has begun a fantastic journey, the variety and breadth of his work grows with every new exhibition as he continues to incorporate a staggering amount of new medias to diversify his already prolific talent. *Ultra Paste* is an original exhibition that is the culmination of years of innovation and months of organisation, which succeeds in creating a truly artistic experience, not just a few pretty pictures.

Ultra Paste by Enrico David runs until 11 November at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in London. For more information on this exhibition please contact the ICA on 020 7766 1418 or at www.ica.org.uk.

Alice Roberts