

REVIEWS: UK

Tit-for-tat exchanges can go on forever, especially when it comes to the bruised, obsessive feelings that orbit ex-lovers. Perfect material, then, for Iain Forsyth & Jane Pollard, artists renowned for music-oriented reenactments that inject an emotional dimension into art. Mining this, their new video *Walking over Acconci (Misdirected Reproaches)* (2008) is an echo, in both form and content, of Vito Acconci's 1973 *Walk-Over (Indirect Approaches)* as well as a kind of 'back chat' to a previous work by the artists, *Walking After Acconci (Redirected Approaches)* (2005).

In the 2005 work MC Plan B slams his ex, while this new work gives space to a female voice, that of Miss Odd Kidd, another rhyme-slinger whose lyrics similarly capitalise on what's deemed an authentic urban London argot. She stalks a corridor reciting a monologue that pings between wit and aggression and is peppered with colloquialisms ("Wakey, wakey, hands off snaky") and put-downs ("Big egos, really small penises: Napoleon syndrome"). Like the wordplay of their titles, these works pun on and update Acconci's original, in which the artist, who addresses the camera smoking, humming and pacing a corridor, lets rip against an imagined ex-lover – for whom the camera and the viewer act as stand-in.

The original is a hair-prickling example of Acconci's take on performance art as a theatre of aggression, where supposedly private behaviour is made public, and the boundaries between acting and exhibitionism on one side of the camera, and voyeurism on the other, make for a sadomasochistic exchange. It's an idea that Forsyth and Pollard make a direct connection with, and some of the lines that attempt to rumble the role of the spectator feel a little too self-conscious for twenty-first-century ears: "Are you there? Are you listening? Are you waiting?" But perhaps this is the point. While the 'all the world's a stage' thing was hardly new in the 1970s, today Acconci's take on narcissistic performance and voyeurism is so normal within mass culture as to be invisible, with the 'stars' and interactive audiences of reality shows and social networking sites being the most ubiquitous examples.

Where the artists are really successful is in their play with this sophisticated layering of poses. In a twist on the original, rather than performing themselves, they have cast a particular kind of professional performer: alternative music stars who channel a 'genuine' street voice. There is no doubt that what we are shown is staged. However, in a homely rainbow-striped cardy, clunky gold jewellery and a ducklike flat-footed strut, Miss Odd Kidd is not your usual pop starlet, and her leftfield persona is given a further authentic nuance by occasional stutters in the monologue. This all crackles enticingly against her reliance on hand-me-down posturing, 'acting hard' and stock phrases. As with Acconci, the work still manages to raise pertinent contemporary questions about what is 'real' and what is 'performed' behaviour, and where, if anywhere, such performance ends. *Skye Sherwin*



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**Iain Forsyth & Jane Pollard**

Kate MacGarry, London  
5 September – 12 October

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*Walking over Acconci (Misdirected Reproaches)*, 2008,  
Blu-Ray HD video, 15 min