

Trisha Donnelly

7 Jan-18 Feb

Air de Paris, Paris

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Review by Jian-Xing Too

What will come out of the woodwork? For something does seem to be hiding in Trisha Donnelly's exhibition at Air de Paris. Her press release, for example, is handwritten in Russian. On the gallery's main wall are four black-and-white photographs composed like Chinese scrolls (*Untitled*, 2005).

Pinned to the wall there are pictures of rubbings. Pencil and paper reveal traces left behind by an insect burrowing wood; photographs re-record and magnify them. The unexposed borders of the print and the cropping of each image are compositionally decisive. That much is visible, and the layering of specific techniques, supports and formats is alluring. As is the rest of the show, which, though divorced in content, formally works as a whole.

Unassuming drawings converse across the gallery, going through walls, creating tempos, rhythms, to-and-fros, and marking the presence of the hand and, above all, of an enigmatic personal language.

All this strikes me as going down like a smooth glass of milk. It's severely harmless, which is precisely the problem with much of the work that is on the rise today.

Donnelly's general formal economy of means is appealing. But it would be thrilling to find in her aesthetic

language a sign of resistance, other than just resistance to being brought to light.

The photographs described above are accompanied by a recording that intermittently sounds from the office on the other side of the wall. It's the introduction to the short-lived 1960s series *The Green Hornet*: 'Another challenge for the Green Hornet, his aid Kato... On police records a wanted criminal, the Green Hornet is really Britt Reid, owner-publisher of the *Daily Sentinel*, his dual identity known only to his secretary and the district attorney...'

The music (played by Al Hirt) is *The Flight of the Bumblebee*, which Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov composed for an opera based on a poem by Pushkin. Hence the Russian writing? The Chinese scrolls, too, may be a tribute to Kato (Bruce Lee's debut in the entertainment industry). And the tiny photograph of a man looking out from an architectural protrusion (*Untitled*, 2005) could be the incarnation of the *Daily Sentinel*.

Entitled *Homosexual California* (2006), another sound piece comes from the gallery's two storerooms. A brisk recording blasts every 20 minutes. I think it's *The Lone Ranger* – who was the Green, Hornet's great uncle, incidentally – bellowing to his white steed.

Dialling the two telephone numbers that appear on the Russian press release yields 'not a working number' and 'please leave a message', followed by a rustling of paper. Another example of the dismally harmless, Kato? Only time will tell, Green Hornet.



Right: Trisha Donnelly, *Untitled*, 2005, video loop, still