

PRESS RELEASE

James E Smith
There is Nothing Left to Lose
03.05.08 - 04.05.08

Magic

Miranda July is an artist, not just a filmmaker or a writer. Everybody hates Miranda July, unless they don't know any better. I know better and I still like Miranda July. Reading her short stories (published together as 'No One Belongs Here More Than You' by Canongate in 2007) is more like reading lots of carefully crafted aphorisms stuck together. She'll write something like;

"I looked at Pip and for a split second I felt as though she was nobody special in the larger scheme of my life. She was just some girl who had tied me to her leg to help her sink when she jumped off the bridge."

She is colloquial and familiar and is clearly trying to explain something to you. If you don't believe her she's terribly affected and pretentious, if you accept what she's saying it creeps over you like a warm cocoon. She either hits the nail on the head or misses completely and is exposed for the pretentious charlatan she really is. She didn't go to art school, she is preposterous enough to think that she could make it without training and now thousands of idiots love her. The thing about Miranda July is that her use of language she attempts to keep you in the present, a conversational tone allows that and when it's achieved it seems effortless. By proxy, you're then caught in the spontaneity of an instant. When you're caught in that moment July wants you to feel like anything's possible.

James Smith didn't do foundation. He went on to one of the best/better art colleges in the country/outside of London straight from school. He is well versed in the business of experiencing art and exhibitions, he has a penchant for wandering around and absorbing information. He knows what it's like to experience an exhibition, to walk around one, to try and decipher the artworks, to look at their titles to try and get a better understanding and to walk on without giving it much thought. James Smith plays around with the idea of an exhibition, placing things where they suggest they shouldn't be, he shows you things that you might recognize, he makes you feel like this piece, or that, could be in your home. Things insinuate themselves into your comfort zone and you imagine them being somewhere else. You might be reminded of the carefully constructed peculiarity of a Tom Friedman piece; a bar of soap with a pubic hair in it that has formed a perfect spiral, an oversized cereal box made from squares cut out of others. Things are slightly distorted, enlarged, collected and all these little details are moments. There are moments of familiarity, even in their alienness. Miranda July's writing also uses that sense of familiarity that culminates into a moment. In this immediacy of objects there is magic: whether considering these things or accepting them this is all happening now. This is where you are.

Paul Sammut.

Paul Sammut has not yet seen the exhibition.
James Smith studied at Nottingham Trent University.

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You have received this. Forthcoming exhibition. An exhibition of works. Selected group. Remember the purpose. So it has to be positive. Below is some information.

You walk in.

Sit down and watch it. Meditative Abstract Video (2009). It is light and airy. Foo Fighters tattoo, a little faded. She was younger. Hot. Paintings in your bathroom or not in your bedroom. Public transport 3 same size looks familiar. Red dot.

Your in luck.

You think you have heard of some of the people. Keep moving. Imagine it in the home. On a plinth. Like a Henry Moore but with a bit of a Franz West.

Keep up the pace.

Holiday photograph. Arrrrr Bisto not arghh the pain. Pretty much. Eiffel tower. France. Moving on. Pieces of lined A5 paper. Pinned in a line. Look sharp. 1947. to a chap named eddy. Belgium or the Netherlands. Romantic history. Whit like ink jet paper. Safe place. Some paintings. A bit 'urban art' nut job tear away. Sprit of '77 how can I stick it to the dude. I'm the dude.

What is important and what is not important?

James E Smith's solo show brings down the curtain upon this wave of Stand Assembly shows yet leaves you confused, maybe in a bad way, maybe in a good, leaving you eager to seek out answers left by James E Smith's untied strings. Exploring the notion of fragmented narratives and inquisitive associations, E Smith shows a diverse cross disciplinary body of work, connected only via the artist's imagination.

Humour, wit, sly sarcasm? E Smith ponders the daily components that trigger memories of yesteryear. Exposing everything yet teasingly keeping key elements that complete the narratives to himself. Attend the penultimate exhibition of Stand Assembly's member's exhibition programme, and discover for yourself who is Eddy? Bedroom or bathroom? and whilst exploring you may or may not find out what E stands for in James E Smith.

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THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE
(except your purse and handbag jotter)

We, at the SSPP offices, were delighted when invited to preview and "promote" the forthcoming exhibition "THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO LOSE BY JAMES E SMITH". It was some mean feat, given that the SSPP offices have now moved to their new luxuriously Soviet headquarters in Germany. However, the offer of an all-expenses paid trip (including accommodation in THE Holiday Inn) to The North brought SSPP Führer Gertrude Twattolover, that is I, a heartburn-like pang of 80's nostalgia and "northern fondness".

Given the everso slightly apocalyptic title of the exhibition, I entered the room, on a full and bloated Northern stomach, surprised and belching in delight at the "room full of stuff" (so I heard a young child, face dusted with coal, exclaim to his Teenage Mum (dot com)). "Yes", I thought, "Art for the people, all people." This was an exhibition destined to unite the poor with the rich, the Vienetta with the Haaaaaagen Daaas, and the AsdaSmartPrice with the NotJustAPrePackagedMealButAMarksAndSpencerPrePackagedMeal.

The journey into James E Smith begins with a group of what I like to call "young people's paintings". This refers to a skilled technique that only young people seem to be able to perform. One's mind travels back to 1991 and the release of those strange medical attachments you add to your felt-tip pen in order to puff a mixture of air and felt-tip pen all over your paper (and beyond). My eyes glide effortlessly over the works and I feel the technique has triumphed over the content in this case, though, wonderfully.

I move on and feel like a trout attempting to swim up stream, that is, against the current and it is now I realise I entered through the back door. Not wanting to disrupt my newly ironed tartan, I decide I shall continue in this manner. "Yes," I think to myself, inspired by all this young people's art, (YPA) "I am still a rebel."

So now I am looking in a mirror... or am I? A young girl, appropriately covered by a flannel swimming costume. It is almost as though someone has stolen a picture from my personal album...(Wait! They have, bloody idiots!) It is a black and white photograph that has delicately faded and curled up on the corners like a pubescent boy gayly attempting an upturned moustache with the aid of some Mrs.Cobbles™ Brown Shoe Polish. I am breathing in the heady fragrance of spray mount and dust as I float, gracefully, to the letter which reveals the fact that love in "the old days" was a lot better. Things were done properly; "Eddy, my dearest, my poodle, my one and only, I regret to inform you that you are no longer my one and only. If you dispute the decision or have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at the address given above."

So romantic. I feel as though I should not be reading such personal letters or looking at such flannel-and-thigh exposed photographs. I feel myself to be a cheeky miniature dog who has

stowed away in the big brown suitcase in the attic going through all the parents' private belongings. However, this feeling passes quickly and I lap up the rest of the letter with nosy glee.

I am beginning to feel hungry again but my intrigue drives me forward, past a collection of delicate pen drawings, perhaps made whilst blindfolded and in a moving vehicle, and onwards towards some modern photography. I notice that someone has dropped some pudding on the floor, hesitate (for it might be art) and then eat it.

Feeling much better I notice, with silent nodding approval, a sculpture that is perching pompously on a plinth, looking over its kingdom of Exhibition Space Land. Its title, "Sculpture for an alcove or recess no smaller than a specific size", suggests that it might be suited to my German Headquarters and I make notes in the back of my handbag jotter: "Can I buy it? Can I ship it? Can I lick it?" (The latter more of a private thought, but there is no prejudice in my handbag jotter.)

I soon cross out that last remark after seeing new pieces that I might like to lick: A collection of very fine paintings based on the idea that public transport is somehow unpleasant. The clever use of acrylic and oil is like a metaphorical juxtaposition of "just in London for the day on our once-a-year day trip" and "I live, work and gout it up in London, all the time, ya". Very fine pieces indeed, real treasures.

Some hooligan-lad has left some very inappropriate "porn" (though I never understood what Chess has to do with s.e.x) on the wall and I feel my rouged cheeks no longer need rouge. Then the young coal-faced boy (Oh, are you still here? Oh, your shoelace is stuck in my kilt pin) tells me that it is part of the exhibition, so I immediately fall into church-like respectful silence and perform a private internal manoeuvre to prevent any more belching. The girl featured in the pictures is awfully pretty and I decide that she and I could be friends.

I feel a gush of Fresh Northern Air© (which has a subtle metallic pigment to it, shimmering, glittering) and realise I am near the entrance, where a very modern video is playing. It is slightly hypnotic and slightly arousing, and I stand and watch for quite some time.

When I left the exhibition I realised that that young dirty child had pick-pocketed my purse and handbag jotter so I have written this piece based on my mental notes and may have possibly confused some events with things that I heard on the radio later that day. GT.

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James E Smith is an artist. That is to say he makes a thing that titles itself, or perhaps it should be, that others in places of authority on such matters like God, James Joyce and also Nicholas Serota entitle, art. That is to say he has taken that crucial and daunting step and has stated a claim as part of the growing demographic of people on this smallening globe that make it - a thing called art - and thusly, respectively have made a claim as part of the growing demographic of people on this smallening globe that call themselves artists. I don't know when he did this, that is, stated his claim and I don't know what 'it', 'it' being what these people, and true, this person, that being James E Smith, is, but I am assuring myself that he has done this, as this is why he has asked me to do this. That is to say this is why I am doing what I am doing now, that being telling you philistines to the ways of James E Smith, what I know of the ways of James E Smith, that being a very diminutive quantity of knowledge stuffs that I am having to purge from the caverns of my own philistinian memory in a full of heart attempt to verbalise how and why James E Smith does 'it' and to some length's what I hold 'it' to be. Anyroute, here in small distances, is what I understand James E Smith to be. He is long and slender of body, his hair would like to be described similarly and he has some of this substance - a hairy one - on his smooth skinned face, beitall a tweak more coarse and hair-like in the hairy sense of the noun. He reminds me a touch of a canine, perhaps one of those afghan strains, elegant, sleek, and ample of stature yet inoffensive. I am pleased by his manner and his soft and reassuring intonation and his ease and ability to make sounds of talk for long, unbroken periods without making the recipient of these sounds tired or disinterested, on the contrary, the contrary. He has engaged me on many an occasion, without the requirement of an input of my noises about my actions and I will be sonorous in this instance here instead and proclaim with unmitigated sobriety, I enjoy listening to the boy! I should like to mind muster that his workly creations in the manner of art are of a parallel fluidity and proficiency. I am gripping forth hope, holding it outwards some maybe would say. Hope I am certainly clasping that this will be the case. And I am sure, lacking the requirement of reassurance, that it will certainly be, that is fluid and proficient, accomplished, a masterly or series of masterly inventions, a succession of things both replete with beauty and lack of pretension, emitting style and finesse whilst being shamelessly understated and modest. Yes, true wonderment, down-right fucking betterment, lets have it right here James E Smith, lets see what you have sir, ok, thank you! So manywhichpath, what does one know about what this male fashions for his skillcraft??? I can correctly tell you that I have seen some of it, some of his craftiness, his cunning foxiness, 'it' if you will. Will you?? You will? Good, then yes I can tell you this much, that much is true, I have seen it, and Ewww Weee! It aint one fraction of a shit half bad I will inform you this quantity. What is it that I have perceptively received with my sparklies? Well I have received a numerate measure of delectable fancies let me learn you this. I've seen stuffs that were drawn and stuffs that were not and were fathomed with the magicians hand and his little wonder-box of black process magic which goes snap or cachheenck cachheenck when one depresses its nipple. I've seen an old bum-like tramp of a man playing instruments of percussion intently, drunk I am sure of it, whilst our man in the field James E Smith sat on a table musing over profundities such as where he might get his next meal and of what it might consist. I've seen the boy bending pitches with machines I know not the names of, to indite the most fantastical clamour, a real raucous abrasion to the shell-like, a wonderfully painful, excruciating audition. I've seen him, back-turned, stripping off reels of a tape to disrupt its normative function of singing sweet lullaby's of Michael Jackson and Now That's What I Call Music 4 or other such year nineteen hundred and eighty delights - the benevolent appropriation and subsequent extradition of an archaic musicological form to the time of contemporaneousness, or something to that end. I've witnessed him re-create the night in a box with no holes or openings, or perhaps that was a dream I had. As much as the distance of what this prodigious youngen' is forging in these moments I am not the most fitting informant. In the truth of the thing all I my own very self have to go upon is a small piece of papyrus with the rather gratuitous portrait of an enbronzed, god-like creation with a wildly large plastic penis seemingly placed bottomward in what must be said to be a manner equal in provocation and transgression, the dirty rascal. Let me assure you, this is not James although it has probably been one hundred hours since last I laid em upon im so I can't really say for sure. So let me hand out with great vehemence and gusto my written offerings of apology, free of all deceit and hypocrisy and say sorry for not rising to the challenge of delineating such very data of his present workliness, my advice would be to open your freakin peepers and have a goosey gan. My humble summation is that the surprises will be pleasant and fulfilling for all.

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May sees the launch of the latest exhibition by James E Smith. Situated at Stand Assembly Studios, Nottingham these brand new works from North Lincolnshire-born artistic polymath continues to explore similar themes to Smith's previous work, but charts new territory in its presentation of the relationship between the spectator and the work itself.

Mixed elements combine 'traditional' artistic medium such as sculpture and drawing with exciting digital forms encouraging the visitor to engage with the themes that are explored.

Drawing on images of popular culture, advertising, fashion, the show looks profoundly at issues of self-perception and representation as we hurtle headlong through the 21st Century. It looks at who we are, how we define ourselves, how we navigate the spaces around us and why we do. But as much as it is a show that can only belong in 2008, it also mines a rich historic vein to explore issues of identity, place and self-perception over time.

Stand Assembly is proud to present this superb collection of new work by one of the most hotly tipped artists on the British contemporary art scene. For further info on 'There is Nothing left to Lose' and its creator, James E Smith, please contact jesmithworks@gmail.com

If you want to think about how you fit into the world right now, visit this show.

Dave Smith, April 2008

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'There is Nothing Left to Lose' is an exhibition of new works from the oeuvre of James E Smith (b 1984, England). Incorporating video, drawing, painting, sculpture and photography Smith intricately spins a web of misinterpretations, deceptions and insincerities.

In *Sculpture for an alcove or recess no smaller than a specific size (55cm x 40cm x 20cm Version suitable as hand luggage)* (2008) Smith suggests that the work is part of a series or edition and that its size and its placing are the only attributes of importance. The object, brightly painted with its pseudo Henry Moore curves acts merely as 'something' to fill a space, its surface and sculptural quality a distraction and insignificance to its function as an artwork, doorstop, coat rack, ornament for the home. The title also tells us that the sculpture complies with UK hand luggage restrictions. It could be stowed underneath a seat or in an overhead compartment of an aircraft providing it could be lifted without assistance, ideal for bringing back from an international art fair.

In *This is a photograph taken in Paris (2005-2008)* and *A Letter from Rikie Van Uden (2008)* Smith uses photography and text to construct possibly fictitious narratives. Carefully deciphering clues as to the origin of these images the viewer is forced to question the authenticity of the material elements presented before them.

In *'Meditative Abstract Video'* (2006 - 2008) Smith scars our perception of what is depicted in the video by forcing us to form a pre-conceived understanding from its title. A spectrum of flickering colour silently loops for eternity but it is unclear whether the video depicts something pictorial or purely abstract. It resembles the view of a camera on the end of some medical apparatus going down some orifice of the human body during surgery or perhaps some shaky footage of a terrorist attack captured on a camera phone. As the viewer watches they are 'perhaps' invited into a trance like state but are conscious that the title begs them to do so. We are told that the video originated from 35mm film and we are watching it transferred to high definition video but this seems unlikely, something in-between this transferral process has been distorted if not lost all together along the way.

In *'W H Smith Drawings'* (2007-2008) Smith has painstakingly replicated pages from a notebook jotter stolen from the high street store W H Smith. However this notebook was never for sale as it was used in store for customers to try out various pens and pencils from the wide range of stationary available. These A5 lined pieces of paper have been meticulously copied and presented beautifully in large frames giving importance to their banal stature. In doing this Smith questions the significance of the imagery and its relation to the title.

In *A Number of Press Releases for an Exhibition* (2008) Smith specially commissioned artists, writers, friends and family members to produce a press release based on a text he had written about the works he planned to show. The text like the other works was probably made up of half-truths and forced interpretations. Smith asked the writers to remember the purpose

of 'The Press Release' and to be positive and promote the show, not to be critical of his intentions.

In *Girl with a Foo Fighters Tattoo (Pitching to the Boss)* (2008) Smith politely nods to Vermeer, its title referencing the masterwork 'Girl with a Pearl Earring' (Johannes Vermeer, circa 1665 – 1675). The alluring gaze of the subject draws us in with her deeply sexual manner yet we are crudely distracted by the ugly "FF" tattoo emblemised on her upper left arm. The slightly faded pigment of the tattoo suggests a clue from the past and questions of permanence, history, future and past arise. The three panels form a pastiche of an advertising campaign for Calvin Klein underwear. Printed on shimmering glossy paper and mounted on foam board they suggest the work of a graphic designer and advertising agency preparing a new idea for a board meeting. The subtitle *Pitching to the Boss* echoes this and again questions the origin of the imagery and the intention to tell some sort of fragmented story.

"Come on guys! There's a lot riding on this so lets hope Calvin doesn't mind too much about the shitty tattoo"

In *Public Transport Paintings* (2006 – 2008) a number of uniformed paintings grace the length of a wall, each equally spaced, a different abstract motif of colour and shape, their sub-titles derived from public transport services, bus routes and numbers. One looks deeply into the surface to look for clues but flatness and the shoddiness of the technique form a wall. There is a sense of beauty about their appearance as a group but inevitably the works will be separated after the exhibition ends and they will head off for different futures in different parts of the world. One hopes they are looked after well and treat with the utmost care and respect they deserve.

'Brangelina' is a term coined by the media to refer to the 'mega-star-acting-world-healing-sexy-duo-couple' Brad Pitt and Angela Jolie. Smith has taken this word to form the basis of the title of some paintings. *Brangelina paintings for the next Urban Art Auction at Bonhams or Wherever* (2008) are 'spray painty' and yes it is fair to say they are pretty 'urban'. They are paintings from the street and they literally mould to their surrounding as some of the paint on their surface bleeds of onto the wall of the urban-converted-factory-gallery-space. Similar in a way to the black stuff that takes over Spidey (Toby Maguire) in Spiderman 3 making him wear eye liner and treat Mary Jane (Kirsten Dunst) like a piece of dirt. These painting have that same air of rebellion to them and admittedly aren't for everyone. A collector of work like this has to have something special about him or her; they have to have a wild side. However the paintings are graded under some kind of system ('Mild', Moderate' and 'Wild') to determine the right painting for the right sort of rebel collector and this is apparent in the varying wildness taking place on the canvases.

All the works attempt to communicate with a specific audience, a buyer, a fan of the work, Collectively the works look like a group show by a number of artists as each work takes on its own visual language. There are tensions between the visual qualities of the works and the titles as they wrestle for dominance.

James E Smith was born in Scunthorpe, England in 1984. He gained his BA (Honours) Degree Fine Art in 2005 from The Nottingham Trent University School Of Art. Smith has exhibited at Ferens Art Gallery, Kingston Upon Hull, The Ropewalk Gallery, Barton Upon Humber, Q Arts, Derby, MIMA, Middlesborough and in Nottingham at Surface Gallery, The Arts Organisation, The Nottingham Castle Museum, Broadway Cinema and Media Centre, Newcastle Chambers.

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James E Smith is a meditative abstract video
James E Smith is not hi-tech, high def
James E Smith is ready for the digital switch over
James E Smith is not silent
James E Smith is light and airy
James E Smith is not on the walls
James E Smith is in frames like in your bathroom
James E Smith is not like in your bedroom
James E Smith is a Girl with Foo Fighters tattoo
James E Smith is not a picture
James E Smith is from a Calvin Klein advert
James E Smith is not hot
James E Smith is wearing black underwear
James E Smith is not an emblem
James E Smith is used
James E Smith is not 26 years of age
James E Smith is a little faded
James E Smith is not younger
James E Smith is so simple
James E Smith is not in your late teenage years
James E Smith is more than one
James E Smith is not abstract
James E Smith is unified
James E Smith is not framed
James E Smith is on the train
James E Smith is not pressed up against a sweaty man
James E Smith is in the city
James E Smith is not chauffeured
James E Smith is abstract
James E Smith is not taking a dump
James E Smith is familiar
James E Smith is not the same size
James E Smith is in luck
James E Smith is not in the middle of the space
James E Smith is no smaller than a specific size
James E Smith is not like a Henry Moore
James E Smith is a specific size
James E Smith is not on a plinth
James E Smith is pretty
James E Smith is not default
James E Smith is between the windows
James E Smith is not small

James E Smith is black
James E Smith is not white
James E Smith is like the old days
James E Smith is not monochrome
James E Smith is the same
James E Smith is not in Paris
James E Smith is black
James E Smith is not white
James E Smith is digital
James E Smith is not reflected
James E Smith is in ones hand
James E Smith is not in Paris, France.
James E Smith is intricate
James E Smith is not found in W H Smith
James E Smith is pinned in a line
James E Smith is not framed
James E Smith is dignified
James E Smith is not sharp
James E Smith is over there
James E Smith is not dated
James E Smith is a young girl
James E Smith is not 16 - 17 years of age
James E Smith is a chap named Eddy
James E Smith is not English
James E Smith is from Belgium
James E Smith is not too far away
James E Smith is changing
James E Smith is not old
James E Smith is a girl with glasses
James E Smith is not in a swimming costume
James E Smith is in very good condition
James E Smith is not very white
James E Smith is treasured
James E Smith is not kept in a very safe place
James E Smith is important
James E Smith is not important
James E Smith is another personality
James E Smith is not a bit 'urban'
James E Smith is messy
James E Smith is not a real nut job tear away
James E Smith is always running
James E Smith is not in me
James E Smith is making millions
James E Smith is not the dude
James E Smith is real
James E Smith is not like that
James E Smith is free
James E Smith is not safe
James E Smith is responsible
James E Smith is not adult