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Boiling Resentments and Restorative Visions



Anthea Hamilton, *Vulcano Table* (2014) Courtesy of Glass Fabrik. Photo credit: Aurelien Mole

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Anthea Hamilton: *Vulcano Table* (2014)

Anthea Hamilton's erupting table is the sculptural equivalent of a gorgeous diva throwing a tantrum: both magnificent and absurd. There's a pneumatic glamour to the gleaming gobbets of scarlet, hand-blown molten glass overflowing from its surface to slide on to the floor. (I love the name of the glass pigment color—Ferrari red).

While its excessive exuberance makes it difficult to ignore (think of the voluptuous swooshing of Cruella de Vil's fur coats in Disney's *101 Dalmatians*), *Vulcano Table* is a highly knowing piece of art. Hamilton often talks about her "performative sculptures", and here she is all too aware of the extent to which she is energetically upping the ante on what sculpture—and glass for that matter—can do.

Hamilton is no stranger to the dramatic gesture. Her 10m-high remake of Gaetano Pesce's 1970s design for a parted-buttock doorway *Project for Door (After Gaetano Pesce)* (2015) was the most photographed piece from last year's Turner Prize exhibition. Other works have included a giant digital printed image on a scaffolding support of a splay-legged male model in

his underpants, *Aquarius* (2012), and a series of laser-cut stainless steel chastity belts.

Now *Vulcano Table*, which is named after a small volcanic island north of Sicily, is on show in the genteel surroundings of The Hepworth Wakefield in Yorkshire. It is part of an installation by Hamilton in which she responds to objects from Kettle's Yard, the former Cambridge home of the late English art collector [Jim Ede](#), which is currently closed for renovation ("[Anthea Hamilton Reimagines Kettle's Yard](#)", until 1 May).

Such a theatrical piece might seem incongruously throat-grabbing amidst Hamilton's re-imagining of Ede's elegantly spare domestic haven, with its meticulously arranged objets-trouvés and works by the great names of international and English Modernism. But perhaps its explosive forms refer to the turbulent emotional hinterland and fraught relationships that often lay behind now-classic works by Ben and Winifred Nicholson, Christopher Wood and Henri Gaudier-Brzeska. And who knows what boiling resentments erupted behind the closed doors of Kettle's Yard itself, when it was inhabited by the famously obsessive Ede and his long suffering wife Helen.

Wolfgang Tillmans, *Weed* (2014)



Wolfgang Tillmans, *Weed* (2014). Courtesy David Zwirner, New York, Galerie Buchholz, Cologne/Berlin, and Maureen Paley, London

Nothing could be more inconspicuous or so easily overlooked as a nameless weed growing in a corner of an unkempt garden. I know this weed: it grows in my garden, too. Its single spindly stem has no flowers to speak of and a minimal root system that can find a foothold pretty much anywhere, but is easy to pull up. This scrappy survivor caught the eye of Wolfgang Tillmans, whose photograph has been blown up into an inkjet print more than four metres high that dangles unframed, secured with just a few small bulldog clips. It is one of the most memorable images in his current exhibition at Tate Modern (“[Wolfgang Tillmans: 2017](#)” until 11 June).

Tillmans makes no attempt to prettify the scruffy surrounding debris of sticks, stones and dead leaves. Yet there is nothing casual about the way in which this master of the seemingly inconsequential shows how a photograph—especially one that has been painstakingly printed to provide such a limpid play of light, shade and surface—can render the everyday so luminous and so beautiful.

On such a scale, every detail counts. As with Albrecht Dürer’s realist masterpiece *The Great (Large) Piece of Turf (1503)* in Vienna’s Albertina, to which *Weed* is surely a nod, we are given a slightly elevated viewpoint from where even the most minute twig, pebble and stem are offered up for scrutiny. The weed stands tall and is both robust and fragile, while the leathery brown corpses of three *Fatsia japonica* leaves curl at its feet.

Other plants have also taken root in the mossy cracks between the paving stones and, like Dürer’s unremarkable piece of sod painted more than 500 years ago, Tillmans’ weed in its random setting appears as both distinct from and utterly interconnected with all that is growing around it. In both single works, and the exhibition as a whole, the sum and the parts work together in unison through the eyes of this most democratic and engaging of artists.

Eduardo Paolozzi, mosaics in Tottenham Court Road Underground station, London (1984)



The Paolozzi mosaics at Tottenham Court Road. The rotunda post restoration © Thierry Bal

While there’s a large Eduardo Paolozzi retrospective currently [on show at London’s Whitechapel Gallery](#) (until 14 May), by far the greatest and most extensive work by this pioneer of Pop Art can be seen for price of a single London Underground ticket.

Paolozzi's mosaics cover about 950 sq m of the subterranean tunnel and concourse walls of Tottenham Court Road station in a trippy explosion of color and dynamic, eclectic imagery that make mundane journeys a psychedelic joy.

Although they were actually made in the early 1980s, the spirit of these mosaics is pure Pop. Paolozzi, a master of collage, celebrates the bustle and dynamism of mechanized city life and the traditional role of the surrounding Soho streets as a louche nightlife centre.

The invasion of Tottenham Court Road by electronics, video and computer stores is another ingredient in this visual smorgasbord. Thrusting saxophones, giant moths, grimacing masks, robotic heads and even a mechanical cow and chicken float amidst a syncopated and tessellated frenzy of cogs, wheels and machine components. In one sequence, which has particular resonance during rush hour, a blue-jeaned everyman runs but is almost engulfed in the densely patterned tide.

Paolozzi's Italian immigrant father ran a sweet shop and ice cream parlor in pre-Second World War Edinburgh and the childhood magic of glittering sugar and lurid wrappers comes through in these brilliant images of Italian glass, as does the artist's preoccupation with science-fiction, technology and popular culture.

For the past few years Paolozzi's iconic *gesamtkunstwerk* has been hidden from view while the station was being remodeled and expanded to accommodate the [Crossrail scheme](#) which, when it opens next year, will travel below the city from East to West. There was huge outcry when, at one point, it seemed as if the mosaics were under threat of vanishing forever. However, by the beginning of this year, 95% of Paolozzi's original scheme had been reinstated and restored to its former glory. (The missing sections surrounding some now-vanished escalators have been given to Edinburgh College of Art, where the artist studied and later taught.) Hopefully this exemplary piece of public art will remain as an accessible monument to an artist who was a passionate believer that the art should be freely available to all.