

# Art Review:

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*'I steal from the drama of Hindu life. And from the kitchen - my pots, are like stolen gods, smuggled out of the court'*

DECEMBER  
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**Thomas Schütte**

A hotel for  
the birds in  
Trafalgar Square

**The Tasteless  
Guide to  
Collecting**

Buying art as an  
investment

**Art Pilgrimage**

Larging it up in  
Paris and London

## Collecting Art

Everyone's at it; why aren't you?

# Subodh Gupta

The Damien Hirst of Delhi?



New work by

Seb Patane & Slater Bradley

# BRUCE LABRUCE AND TERENCE KOH: BLAME CANADA

PERES PROJECTS, BERLIN

30 SEPTEMBER - 10 NOVEMBER

To many from the United States, Canada is a strange world, and popular culture has often supported this view. In *Bowling for Columbine* (2002), for instance, self-proclaimed saviour Michael Moore depicts the nation as a weapon-free zone, a stronghold of peace and happiness. In the cinematic fantasies of David Lynch, however, Canada represents the place beyond the border, not in a political, but in a moral and psychological dimension. Lynch's oeuvre is also the inspiration behind a joint project by Canadian-born artists Terence Koh and Bruce LaBruce, *Blame Canada*. Bearing in mind the somewhat ambivalent relationship that the US has to its neighbour, the artists regard Lynch's movie *Twin Peaks - Fire Walk with Me* (1992) as the epitome of the notion of Canada as 'the other'.

*Blame Canada* is a hermetic installation built inside the upstairs space at Peres Projects. It is a reconstruction of one of the movie's sites, the infamous Bang Bang Bar, where Lynch's protagonist Laura Palmer lives out her dark side and meets her suitors. Upon entering the bar/installation, the first thing encountered is a flashing neon sign - a facsimile of the one in the film. The large main room is sombre and has no windows. It is equipped with a stage, bar area, tables, chairs and a so-called dick cave - a platform with perforated glory holes in its ceiling and floor. This is, after all, a work by Koh and LaBruce. The artists inscribe an explicitly homoerotic reading into an environment that Lynch set up to play out tensions inherent to heterosexual relationships.

Yet the travesty doesn't stop there. For the opening event, drag artist Vaginal Davies was invited to act out her version of Julie Cruise's 'Questions in a World of Blue' (1992), the song that is performed in Lynch's movie when Laura Palmer enters the bar. Some glory holes were also used, and now that the party is over, dildos and empty bottles serve as souvenirs and evoke the impression that the party could start again at any moment.

The work is uncanny in many respects. Considering that it is a piece by Terence Koh and Bruce LaBruce, it is tempting to describe it as subtle by virtue of its discreet use of sexual references. This relatively coy approach also explains why the installation invites psychoanalytic interpretation as a stage for all that is and must remain repressed, strongly borrowing from David Lynch, of course. But it also foregrounds an eerie trend in contemporary culture that reduces art to a *mise en scène* for marketing events and parties. Granted, the opening performance had its place within the logic of the work. But Berlin is not *Twin Peaks*. What could have come across as a subversive or radical statement in another context is just another party in the environment of a dealer gallery that operates according to the mainstream market credo of 'sex sells'. *Astrid Mania*

*Blame Canada*, opening night performance, 29 September. Courtesy Peres Projects, Berlin

