



*Nicholas Byrne and Anthea Hamilton
Calypsos*

Friday 16 October – Monday 19 October 2009
OFFSITE: Zoo 2009, London

Studio Voltaire has commissioned Nicholas Byrne and Anthea Hamilton to create a collaborative work. This will be the artist's first collaborative venture, one that brings together their separate practices of painting and sculptural installation in a new media. The resulting animation takes its starting point from a record from their collection *Calypsos – Too Hot To Handle* with songs including *Don't Touch Me Nylon* and *Mommie Out De Light*. The different impulses that each artist has established in relationship to the record's lyrics and cover are identifiable in the loop. The subject of the record extends beyond an anecdote, stemming into a nimble ode to the sensibility of a Calypsonian and the origins of carnival that can bear resemblance to the Pierrot figure of Commedia dell'Arte. Outwardly, there is the suggestion of epicene self-portraits, The Charmer, a sleazy clown immersed in nylon and Duke of Iron, an over-wrought chancer who instead of the classics only learns to 'jive'.

Studio Voltaire's invitation does not hope to make for a merger or compromise, rather it would ask to be thought of as a Venn of opposites coming together through confrontation. By turns abrasively trespassing and talking over each other then sharing separate, incongruous loves. For example, the yellow and black colours of Byrne's easel painting of Tied Collars jump off and are caught in the hands of Hamilton, coating fingers, thumbs and palms transforming the seductive and highly structured painting into a living entity, one capable of feeling, stroking, manipulating objects. Byrne, in turn, asks that the tri-partite sculpture of Hamilton's, Man is brought back into play as an animated protagonist. A life size cut-out is erected in the *mise en scène* as an incarnation of Hamilton herself in caricature gender swap. In conversation between the artists, a guide that has also been taken as a challenge is Susan Sontag's 1964 notes on 'Camp', with regard to 'snaring a sensibility' the artists aspire for the work to remain as alive and open as the subject.

Taste has no logic and no proofs. But there is something like a logic of taste: the consistent sensibility which underlies and gives rise to a certain taste. A sensibility is almost but not quite ineffable. Any sensibility which can be crammed into the mould of a system, or handled with the rough tools of proof, is no longer a sensibility at all it is hardened into an idea.

- Susan Sontag, *Against Interpretation and Other Essays*, New York, Farrar Straus, 1966; London, Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1967

Suggestive of the format of a platform game or perhaps pieces of automata, here our characters are implicated by looking out through a play of frames. Openings and structures such as arches, windows and doorways appear and behold personal image types and figures. As a piano roll would play an arrangement in the round, here the arrangement consists of a river of visual material used in conversation and experimentation that stands in for a process of digestion and contributes to the forming of an 'ineffable' interior.