

INTIMATES: large and small

Corinna Spencer visits two new artist-run galleries.

Aid & Abet, Cambridge

Aid & Abet is an artist-led space based in Cambridge interested in a cross-disciplinary approach and the self initiated DIY method of making art. Co-founded by artists Sarah Evans, David Kefford and CJ Mahony.

I visited Aid & Abet during its inaugural project *Small Scale Survival* with artists Will Cruickshank, Emily Speed, Kirsty Tinkler and Laura White, located in a cavernous, reclaimed railway building.

My first impressions were that the work exhibited a thoughtful approach to both space and viewer. Never feeling small or detached, the experimentation that has brought all of the works into being drew me in and held my attention.

From White's car, installed and transformed into a pod like habitat, to Speed's small slices of nearly livable architecture, I was never left out but placed firmly in the centre of these strange living spaces. I felt intimately integrated into the work and the space because the artists had been encouraged to take risks in the extremes of scale and material.

Because the project was initiated on site, there was a conversational jostling going on between the works that had their beginnings in the vision for the space. The roots were in the working process. Describing the space as a laboratory, it felt



like the artists had been afforded the time to allow the works to simultaneously bubble up to the surface, pushing and pulling against each other along the way to settle together ready for the last component, me the viewer.

Aid & Abet seem to have a vision for a space where artists can work unselfconsciously but are always careful to include the viewer, engaging in conversation silently, physically and otherwise. The atmosphere of welcome and openness left me feeling that I had been discovering more than merely seeing.

'Full Time Hobby' is at Aid & Abet until 30 July 2011



Top to bottom: Laura White, 'Loving All My Life', 2011, mixed media; photograph Aid & Abet. Will Cruickshank, 'The Fan and the Funnel', 2011, mixed media; photograph C Spencer.

Dalla Rosa Gallery, London E8

Another thoughtful approach to a gallery is that of Dalla Rosa. A roving gallery which has so far occupied two spaces, one in the La Rouche building, Whitechapel and now a petite space in the vast and varied arts community of Netil House on Mare Street, Hackney. On my last visit I saw the exhibition *I beg you to hear me*, a project by Kiril Bozhinov and Francesca Ricci. Here the artist and writer revealed a multi-media collection of pieces based on the lives and works of Russian writers active during the 1920s and 1930s. Using small portraits, voice and text, a long drawn out project became a

personal quest to bring into being the life and works of the subjects. The results were like looking at images from forgotten corners of my own family history. Stained and obscured by time.

In both of the spaces Dalla Rosa have occupied so far, the gallery has created an atmosphere where art viewing is an intensely personal and private experience. Exhibitions have reached out to photography, painting, collage and literary investigation, bringing them back into a space, encouraging private reflection and contemplation. Within this there is a feeling of hushed, pushing against boundaries, evident in a past exhibition by photographer Aaron McElroy. His subtle but voyeuristic photographs underpinned the passionate strength that the gallery promotes through its choice of artists.



Top to bottom: Aaron McElroy, 'Untitled' from the series 'Traces', 2010, digital print on fine art paper, courtesy of Dalla Rosa Gallery. Kiril Bozhinov & Francesca Ricci, 'I Beg You to Hear Me', 2011, multi media; photograph Dalla Rosa.

Both Aid & Abet and Dalla Rosa, new spaces but vastly different in scale, encourage an intimate relationship between the exhibited artists, their work and the viewer. A careful informality invites me into the space and allows me to converse with the works, just as the artists have. In both cases there is a sense of forward movement and non-complacency, pushing at the boundaries of what, where and how to show art without alienating anyone.

Dalla Rosa may be on the move again. See their website for more information.