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Royale With Cheese

Aicon Gallery, London, UK



Shezad Dawood, *Mother Fucker Love (Diptych)* (2005), oil on board

'Royale With Cheese', a group exhibition at Aicon Gallery in London, takes its title from one of the many quick-fire conversations in Quentin Tarentino's *Pulp Fiction* (1994), in which Jules, played by Samuel L. Jackson, explains the origins of the French name for a quarter-pounder burger with cheese. Translations and the interpretation of signs and signifiers (and the confusion and misunderstandings that

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by *Eliza Williams*

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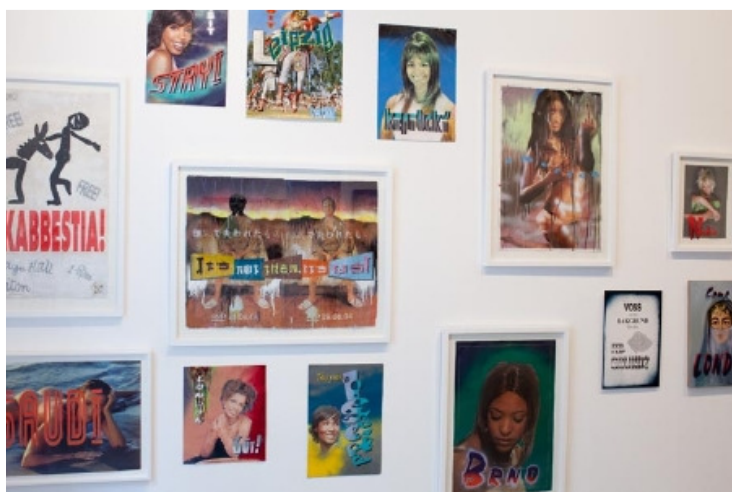
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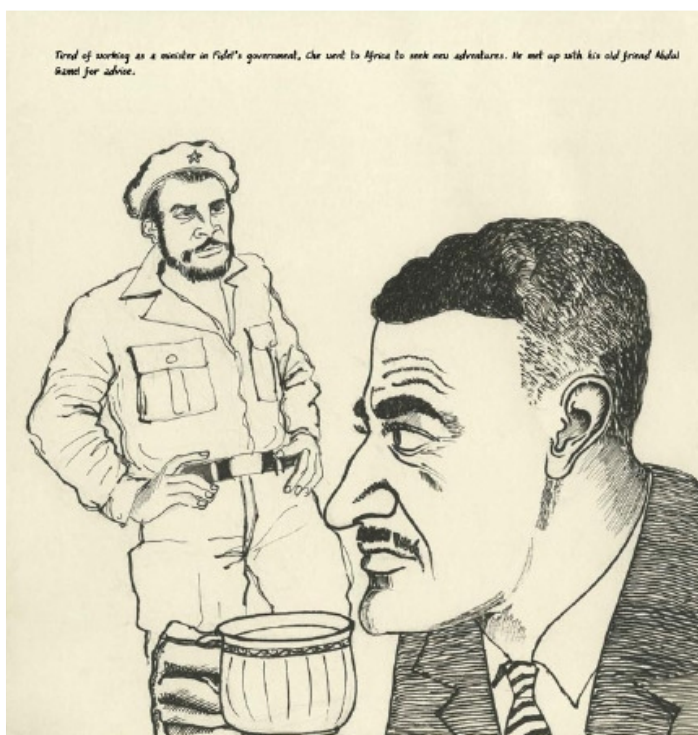
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arise from this) are at the centre of this quirky show (curated by Niru Ratnam), which brings together art works from Indian, Pakistani and British artists.



Simon Bedwell. Photograph courtesy: Polly Braden

Words – and wordplay – are prominent in much of the work here. Simon Bedwell presents a clutch of poster-style works (2004–8) which combine found imagery overlaid with text. A number of the works appear as unexpected travel ads – a distinctive image of Jarvis Cocker giving a two-fingered salute is distorted by spray paint to give the singer a melting face while ‘Britain’ is artfully applied in one corner, while another, trashier photograph of a woman lying provocatively in the sea simply has the word ‘Saudi’ emblazoned across it. Bedwell’s use of simple, if out-moded, design techniques such as Clip Art gives his works a familiarity that belies the disconnect between word and image in the works.



Sarnath Banerjee, *Che* (2008)

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'Che' (2010), a series of comic-book drawings by Indian graphic novelist and artist Sarnath Banerjee, briefly tells the story of Che Guevara's journey to Africa 'to seek new adventures', his involvement with then-president Laurent-Désiré Kabila in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and the cultural clashes that ensued. Banerjee's works bring to mind other recent graphic novels tackling political situations and events, such as *Persepolis* (2000) by Marjane Satrapi, or *The 9/11 Report: A Graphic Adaptation* (2006), and, while intriguing in the gallery space, would have had more success in the expansive format of a book.

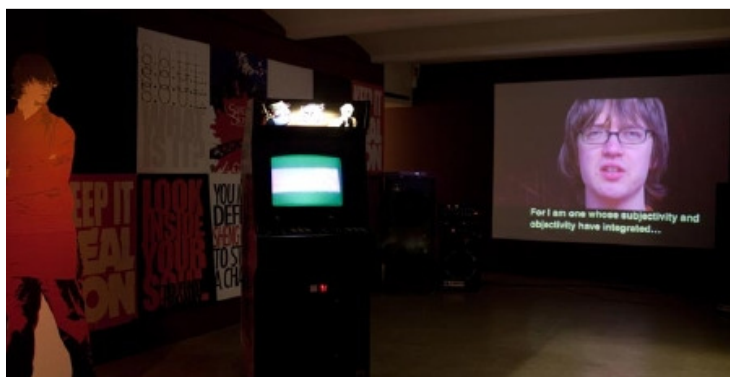
Shezad Dawood's diptych *Mother Fucker Love* (2005) dominates one wall of the space, and sees a hippy character shown alongside a piece of graffiti-style text, both roughly painted in oil directly onto wooden boards. More refined are the contributions by the Pakistani Modernist artist Sadequain, which also play with ideas of calligraphy, and Debnath Basu's elegant collage works, which incorporate handwritten letters from the artist's father.

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David Blandy, *The Complete Way of the Barefoot Lone Pilgrim* (2004–ongoing), installation view. Photograph courtesy: Polly Braden

While expansive in its ambition, 'Royale With Cheese' treads a fine line between intrigue and awkwardness in its eclectic combination of works. Downstairs things are somewhat simpler, with the large space filled with one installation, by David Blandy. *The Complete Way of the Barefoot Lone Pilgrim* was begun in 2004 and is ongoing, forming part of the artist's explorations of modern life as seen through philosophies drawn from popular culture. Here Blandy takes on the persona of a Shaolin Monk, appearing *Karate Kid*-style in various media from computer game, to comic book, to film. Despite his respect and devotion to the task though, Blandy's is a curious sort of fandom, oddly dispassionate. His installation is particularly ill-served here by being linked in the mind to Tarantino, who in spite of his love of cultural referencing, creates films that transcend the work of his heroes and bring something new to the genre. Blandy's installation, by contrast, is diligent yet mediocre, unlikely to inspire its own replications just yet.

Eliza Williams

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