

THE ARTISTS

CHRISTIAN WARD
TIM NOBLE AND SUE WEBSTER
SARAH LUCAS



From top
Christian Ward in his studio, 2003.
Au Naturel, Sarah Lucas, 1994.
Detail from *The New Barbarians*, Tim Noble and Sue Webster, 1997/99.
Inside the Island, Christian Ward, 2003.

THE ART OF ZEN

'Landscape' seems almost too tame a term to describe Christian Ward's eye-grabbingly vivid paintings where Technicolor mountains, caverns and grottoes shimmer with rainbows, cascade with multicoloured waterfalls and are wreathed in iridescent mist.

The influences of this 25-year-old graduate of the Royal Academy Schools range from Sixties psychedelic graphic design to ancient Chinese paintings, as well as the latest Japanese animation techniques. Yet for all their phantasmagoric otherworldliness

direct memories, there are strange little aspects that seemed very familiar.' Yet he's keen to emphasise that, 'these paintings are as much a mental island, an unknowable space that I can do what I want in, but which in the end does what it wants.'

Then there's the physical quality of the paint itself: no shiny surfaces and quick-drying acrylic here, but juicy areas of oil paint that gives the work a direct physical immediacy that prevents it from tumbling into kitsch. Ward attaches great importance to technique and applies his paint in lush, sweeping brushstrokes that he's compared to the raking of gravel around the rocks in Zen gardens. 'I'm very interested in this idea of origin, and for me origin as a subject is very hard to pinpoint. Painting, because of its history, deals with origin very well. It's got this life to it that isn't apparent in a lot of other mediums'.

However, while Ward may extol the virtues of paint, he is loath to be placed in any pigeonhole. 'It's where I am at the moment, but I'm not stuck in painting,' he insists. 'I also enjoy doing sculpture and 3D work and messier stuff — I don't want a trademark, it's very much part of a process.'

While he's happy to have been singled out by Saatchi, 'it means I can carry on, which is a good thing.' Ward is already pondering new avenues, 'I've been approached by these people who do computer animation and I'm thinking about trying something out on that front.'

Louisa Buck

PUNK SCHLOCKERS

Crude, barefaced, garish, gimmicky — yet joyous and exuberant like a funfair or a day at the seaside — at first glance, the art of Tim Noble and Sue Webster consists merely of cheap thrills and end-of-pier illusionism. The meticulous crafting of huge piles of rubbish

RUDE GIRL

Sarah Lucas exhibited one of her most famous works, *Two Fried Eggs and a Kebab*, in 1992, in a shop in Soho. Every morning, she had to get up and buy a kebab, then fry the eggs, then arrange them carefully on a table. 'It seemed part of the installation,' she has said. 'It never crossed my mind that anyone would buy it.'

Charles Saatchi, who did, has long been a Lucas fan and patron. So enormously successful has she become, the carefully posed eggs and melons, the fags and obscenely gesturing fists, the scowling self-portraits and titillating tabloids, have passed into YBA iconography as surely as Damien Hirst's cows and Tracey Emin's tent. Other artists hijack banal domestic objects for their own (often feminist) ends — Mona Hatoum's series of menacing kitchen appliances springs to mind — but Lucas, now 41, does it with more venom and energy, more dirty-mouthed humour, more gall.

Much of the work quite obviously deals with old-fashioned stereotypes of gender and class. By appropriating the attitudes and accessories of blokedom — the tabloid pin-ups, the donkey jacket, the beer cans and fags — and then turning them into art, Lucas makes them funny or slightly sad or