

C106 review

Derry: Ciarán O'Doherty



Ciarán O'Doherty: *Mercury Contact*, installation shot; courtesy Context

The great coach-house entrance to the Playhouse/Context overrun by the piece *Mercury rising*. A thumping flow of tumbling, strangely familiar objects - home-made industrial white goods, bass bins, speakers, spinning cylinders, 'Leslie' amps, spinning the chaotic orchestrations of the artist 360°, sculpting sound, the whole shrouded in a white mist of dry ice as it makes visible the thudding tempo of the drum of kangaroo skin, beaten mechanically by compressed-air-operated pistons. The internally lit apparatus glow like home-made attempts at a future technology. A futurism joined by a chaotic tribal orchestration. The artist and assistants with their catatonic cacophony are reminiscent of the followers of the renegade Kurtz in *Apocalypse now*. White mists, glowing lights, the tangle of wires and compressor cables strewn throughout, create an unnerving barrage of sounds and truculent objects. The location now a gauntlet to be run before one can enter the building, a mercurial tribal invitation of sorts, fearsome in its angry attempts to twist and sculpt sound itself. From the outside the whole scene resembles a demonic nativity, a piece of pure theatre. This was a raw and impressive performance/installation. Definitely one to watch.

Damien Duffy is an artist.

Ciarán O'Doherty: *Mercury Contact*, Context Gallery, Derry, 17 October 2003.