

Flash Art

James Aldridge at Chapter

Gordon Dalton, May-June 2005

AT THE GALLERIES

CARDIFF

James Aldridge at Chapter

James Aldridge engages the viewer in a seductive series of landscapes that lull you into a false sense of security before betraying the fact that they may be far darker places. Desolate as they may seem, these landscapes inspire feelings of liberation and contentment, and Aldridge balances this expertly, never slipping into overtly gothic or saccharine imagery but hinting at both, so that his pictures can be read as the campest of heavy metal album covers or a perversely collected set of field guides. They are full of repeated motifs such as that of crows circling overhead. Stencilled moths, herons and the occasional deer go about their

business in a complexly constructed world of decorative foliage, remote mountain ranges and meandering valleys. *Paradise*, a small room constructed from four large scale canvases that recall 17th century scenic wall paper, provides total immersion in Aldridge's world. The painting process is reversed here, with the background painted around the foreground stencilled forms, allowing an intuitive approach to emerge alongside a more formal strategic structure. Aldridge's work is at its best when beauty and darkness, structure and intuition exist in a direct confrontation with the viewer.

—Gordon Dalton



JAMES ALDRIDGE, *Northern* (detail), 2004. Oil on canvas, 180 x 307 cm. Courtesy the artist and David Risley Gallery, London.

NEW YORK

Trade at White Columns

New director and chief curator of White Columns Matthew Higgs based "Trade" on a simple premise: ask each of the 14 participating artists to invite another artist with whom they had once swapped work, and display the exchanged artworks. The show proposes that we view the exchange-value of objects through the social relations between the people making the work itself.

The artists often exchanged work that was clearly related, either thematically or formally. Rainer Ganahl and Martha Rosler's swap

revolves around Rosler's image of a naked woman in a kitchen. The shapes in Jesse Bransford's *Abyss Study* and Jennifer Cohen's *Untitled Flower* resemble one another. Carter points out that he and Ruth Root's pieces "both... have 'eyes'" and they "were excited by the idea of them appearing to 'look' at each other." Making these points of similarity the premise of a trade might be a technique for avoiding the "weirdness" of trade, as Root describes it in the mini-catalogue accompanying the exhibition. Shows like "Trade" illuminate the

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