**FLASH REVIEWS**

**NICHOLAS BYRNE**  
**STUDIO VOLTAIRE - LONDON**

The title of Nicholas Byrne’s show belies the visitor’s experience of the work, which elicits thoughts about transparency, depth and interaction, rather than alienation or fragmentation, as the word “Divider” might imply. The central piece is an iron, steel and lead structure, effectively a plume of smoke — curvilinear, alternating between filigreed and geometric patterning — rising from the floor to the blackened ceiling. Bisecting the space, the sculpture operates as both window and screen, framing the room in its negative spaces. However, the large metal structure appears slight in comparison to the rest of the show: four much smaller paintings, on copper and linen, leaning against the wall perpendicular to it. Hovering between figuration and abstraction, each bears an approximation of a head and twisted, stylized body parts. On the surface they sparkle with the tingly quality of toys — all color, decoration, optimism. However, if the work at times risks being so smooth as to lose all traction, it is the alarming depth of the paintings, on closer examination, that brings complexity to the exhibition. These four forms writhe and buckle beneath unnamed burdens, momentarily recover their forms, and ultimately are left to exist somewhere in between annihilation and renewal.

*Sarah Andress*

**CLAUDIA WIESER**  
**GALERIE BEN KAUFMANN - BERLIN**

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**SHIRANA SHAHBAZI**  
**BOB VAN ORSOUW - ZURICH**

From portraits of people and taxidermic animals, to still lives with fruit and natural landscapes, Shirana Shahbazi has successfully reinvented the most traditional subjects in art; she has transformed them into new, surprising images, connecting them in all-encompassing installations that manage to merge radically different elements while maintaining the individual identity of each one. This show presents a series of photographs of insects and vegetation picked up from natural history archives, geographical landscapes and two outstanding carpets knotted following images shot beforehand in her studio. Everything flows naturally through the space, although meticulously arranged; by exhibiting her images together without labels or captions, Shahbazi strips away their specificity to make room for imagination — a combination of proximity and distance that nevertheless preserves each piece’s cultural identity. Influenced by the history of Western and Middle-East painting as well as German photography, Shahbazi has developed a language that gives her subjects a quiet dignity in today’s image-saturated world. It’s a triple translation through which the artist stages her own allegory of memory and time, making visible the redefinitions that take place when memories overlap.

*Michele Robecchi*

**PABLO PIJNAPPPEL**  
**GALERIE JULIETTE JONGMA - AMSTERDAM**

Through his latest slide and sound installation, *Homer*, Pablo Pijnappel looks at the lives of three individuals who have retreated to the fringes of society, drifting around a town named Homer, in Alaska. The voice-over provides descriptions of the lives of a barber in Alaska; Spencer, an artist who moves to Alaska; and Luis Ho, a Chinese character. All seem to be running away from their past.

The mostly black-and-white photos present settings such as an empty barbershop, a lone highway covered with snow, or a lodge. We begin to connect them by following the story. Facts and phenomena are constantly confused by the deliberate use of silence, repetition or blackouts in our memories.

What is most intriguing about Pijnappel’s work is the fact that the narrative he uses resembles the way we remember. We go back and forth in time, confusing the elements and eliminating bits and pieces. One may match the simple narrative line and pile commentary upon commentary, but we shall never grasp the simple dimensional value of experiencing life in itself.

When looking at Pablo Pijnappel’s installations one cannot help but leaving the room with a feeling of anxiety. By separating the feeling from the signs and the settings of the stories he manages to show we are caught in our own memories of a nonexistent reality.

*Jose Springer*