

In which **Pawn** having extricated himself from his day to day life for *interval* finds that just as life imitates art, so does art imitate life. Furthermore, during this discovery, finds that such mirrors, when held up to one's life, can provide variously valuable lessons and frequent opportunities for sheepish laughter. Armored with said knowledge, and feeling especially humbled and foolish having just seen his life held up, thusly, for examination, resolves to strive for less drama and less comedy in life, or at least for *better* drama and comedy, if it must be there.

Day 2, at a decent hour, X launches herself from bed with all the speed and grace of a three toed sloth and after a breakfast of rashers and eggie-weggs your intrepid citizens plummet out of the apartment and into the day, already started without them but showing no signs of waiting for their participation.

We alight first at the Tottenham (pronounced Tot-nam) Court tube to procure our Oyster cards. Much fuss with the machines, which don't really work but serve to distract people who would otherwise be queuing for the single gate agent and complain about the length of queue, so they instead complain about the failed machines and get into a now shorter queue after those who belligerently stayed on queue in the first place have been served and on their way. I pity the poor TFL wage slave whose job it is to convince people to un-queue and use the machines instead, just to have to watch, powerless, as the machines fail to do anything useful. [but he did resemble Robert Carlyle, so some were grateful for his attentions - X]

Once cleared through what feels like a more rigorous and grueling process than cross-border customs, we are being rocketed south through the Northern Line underground to Southbank and the Hayward Gallery. Two exceptional exhibits are in right now, [Annette Messager "The Messengers"](#) and, closing Tuesday, "Mark Wallinger curates The Russian Linesman: Frontiers, Borders and Thresholds." [overheard, "Is it like "The Wichita Line Man?" - X] Whoa Nellie, hold onto your hat! It is hard to imagine two more different shows for this venue, and it is hard to imagine two shows which could exceed any expectation you might bring to the Hayward. Where to start?

Annette Messager is a collector and a purveyor of collections. She uses a multitude of media; sketch, oil, acrylic, collage, fibre, fabric, motion control... the list goes on and on. She builds collections of objects, concepts, thoughts, guilty pleasures, embarrassments, revelations, whimsy, and finds ways to display them so that we can enter into her world, or not, engage or remain aloof; our choice. But, even if we remain standoffish, we are inside her head, or a model of her head, and we start to understand her world view.

Her work is not always comfortable, and we sometimes find ourselves wondering if a particularly difficult image or installation is real, or sarcastic or ironic. There is much violence and much shame in her work, and while sometimes it may force the viewer to confront the presence of violent or shameful behaviours or thoughts in their own hearts, sometimes it may just leave the viewer cold, hurt or dumbfounded.


There is much remarkable within this exhaustive retrospective. Of special note to **Pawn** were:

How My Friends Would Do My Portrait: A collection of dozens of portraits of the artist in a variety of media showing just how differently we may be viewed by all of those people in our lives.

Collection To Find My Best Signature: A collection of over a hundred small framed works, each featuring up to 10 different takes on the artist's signature, arranged in a large diamond shaped grid.

The Men I Love, The Men I Don't Love: This is part of the Room of Secrets, a sort of meta-collection of collections, displayed as a room into which holes have been cut at different heights and positions, allowing the viewer a glimpse inside a woman's private study, as it were, to see what she collects and what does that really say about her. There are dozens of

collections in this room, including Voluntary Tortures, a look at the things that women do to themselves, or allow to be done to them, in the name of beauty.

Gloves - Head:  A large installation piece in which hundreds of knit gloves, with coloured pencils inserted where the finger tips would be, are arranged on the wall to make the image of a face. The gloves bulge out, all stuffed, making their sharpened coloured-pencil fingernails seem quite vicious and threatening.

The Exquisite Corpse [le Cadavre Exquis]: A human pelvis, spine and skull to which are attached, via long cords, moulded claw-like hands and feet, and a beakish proboscis. This is all suspended in air from a scaffold and the hands and feet are moved about like those of a marionette by means of motors and winches, trolleys and suchlike, all while strikingly lit from the sides and above, casting ghoulish shadows all about. The effect, accompanied by Philip Glass-ian music, was hypnotic, to say the least. The guard, a strikingly beauty in an Audrey Hepburn kind of way, just stared at this spectre the whole time we were there.

And a room of slowly inflating, writhing and collapsing lush fabric shapes, organic and carnal, yet so enticing I wanted to be among them, just another gently respirating member of this eternal/internal seraglio - X

We could go on, but you've already stopped reading, so what's the point. We finally took our leave of Annette Messenger and trundled upstairs to The Russian Linesman.

You know what? This is just too much to disgorge all at once. I will say this; the Russian Linesman was a superbly curated show, very inventive, very revealing, and it will be closed before you could ever hope to see it, so what does it matter *anyway*?

What's next, you ask? [Well, it's a leisurely walk along the Thames, with stops for photography, sand castle construction, coffee, mocking of tourists, etc., suddenly turning into a speed walk that rivalled Chairman Mao's Long March under Nic's whip, as we realized we might well be late for the play at the Barbican. Which is a 1970's mixed use labyrinth in itself, especially when you we arrive three minutes before curtain (not that there was a curtain). - X

] Well, it's "Andromaque," by Jean Racine. Written in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, this is the tale of what happened after the Trojan war. What happens after Achilles and Agamemnon and Helen and all go back home and try to return to life as usual. More specifically, what happens to their kids, when they grow up, and have to deal with the overturned landscape which had been in place for generations. What happens? Well, they are all wrapped up in ridiculous love triangles, requited and unrequited, and with all of the subtlety of a soap opera and the plotting side kicks from your favourite Shakespeare play...well, all hell breaks loose.

This play is presented in the original French, with super titles. In the Silk Road theatre in the Barbican complex, this is a problem. This is a lovely, intimate, proscenium theatre, but with the steeply raked seating section so popular during the 1970s. Why is this a problem?

Because for all but those in the very rear rows this means that the audience are constantly having to look up to the super titles and then back down to the actors. This deprives the audience of the opportunity to really watch the actors' craft, and deprives the actors of the undivided attention of the audience. In a less steeply raked theatre, the super titles would not have had to be placed so high up, and more of the audience would have been spared this difficult choice. [Except for the lady in front of us who spent the interval reading the play in French...show off! - X]

The show itself was wonderful. It was beautifully lit, staged, acted and produced. Two thumbs up! We do not single out any one performance, for this was truly an ensemble piece. [Not quite, says X, The king, Pyrrhus and Helen's daughter, Hermione, "If there had been any scenery, they would have chewed it!"]

Okay, where do two pagans go from there? To church, of course. We bused and trudged from Barbican, in The City, down to Waterloo, and then back to Victoria Embankment and up to Trafalgar Square, to St. Martin-in-the-fields to acquire tickets to a concert of Vivaldi, "Four

Seasons by candlelight," in the nave of St. Martin-in-the-field. We got two in pews, restricted views (WTH, it's music, not dance) and caught a quick bite to eat in the Crypt. Pork and leek sausages over potato mush with boiled red cabbage and a red wine/gravy reduction; Â£7.99. Quite good, despite my general loathing for British sausage. These were moist and tender, and delightfully tasty in the gravy. [and consumed at tables set over the graves of English worthies of centuries past, whose early departures from this world were probably due to a similar diet. - X]

The concert was about what we expected; top 40 classics played by the Belmont Ensemble of London:

Bach - Brandenburg Concerto No. 3

Vivaldi - Concerto for Two Violins

Bach - Air on the G String

Pachelbel - Canon in D

Vivaldi - Sinonia 'Alla Rustica'

Mozart - Salzburg Symphony No. 2

Handel - Arrival of the Queen of Sheba

While the whole program was good, and hung well together, there were some disappointments. There was something wrong, in the first portion, with the sound from the viola. This was not a performance issue, but simply that the sound of the viola was "boxy" in its upper registers. Maybe a misplaced bridge or a bad tuning. [too embarrassed to admit that I didn't know there WAS a viola until Nic made this perceptive comment. - X] Hard to say, but after interval it was all good. The Mozart, especially, and the Handel were quite strong, and led to a partial ovation. [And quick exit by your correspondents, with no genuflecting. It was a long day, and the Scotch, the Scotch was calling. - X]

This type of "Pops classics" show is quite common these days in large European cities, but they do deliver what the audience really comes for: an opportunity to hear familiar music in an exceptional venue, played by competent, and sometimes even inspired, musicians. A nice night out, but nothing to write home about (oops, guess that means I have to erase those last several graphs!).

Back home now, [via Charing Cross Road. Number 84 is vacant, next to a Subway sandwich shop and across from "BARGAIN BOOKS OFFICIAL SEX SHOP" - X] taking turns at the keyboard (X is editing and contributing) and getting ready for bed. Lot's of new photos, will post those shortly.

Ta!