

EMILY ALLCHURCH – A RETROSPECTIVE

(September 19 – October 20, 2006)

Frost&Reed Contemporary, originally the *Blue Gallery* and now the new sister operation to *Frost&Reed*, is proud to announce its opening exhibition **Emily Allchurch – A Retrospective** (September 19 – October 20), a comprehensive overview of the young British artist's work to date. Based on her two critically acclaimed light-box series **Settings** (2003-2006, 13 piece series) and **A Digital Picture of Britain** (2006, 3 pieces commissioned by the BBC for their eponymous series), the exhibition will also inaugurate the newly refurbished inner gallery at *Frost&Reed's* St. James's premises, London.

For both *Settings* and *A Digital Picture of Britain*, Allchurch has selected a number of paintings by European masters that will be familiar to many, work by artists as diverse as Giorgione, Claude, Friedrich and Turner. She then carefully reconstructs them in a contemporary idiom, but each now entirely composed of often hundreds of photographs taken around south and east London. For example, *Setting II (after Canaletto)* exchanges the buildings along the Grand Canal in 18th century Venice with others tracked down in Mile End, Shoreditch and Limehouse. Similarly, locations across Crystal Palace, West Norwood, Brixton and Peckham were sourced for *Tempest (after Giorgione)* and *Outlook (after Claude)*.

These images are digitally spliced to create a seamless collage and presented as large backlit transparencies, accentuating the dramatic allusion of the pieces. In these contemporary versions, the original protagonists have been removed, shifting the focus to the background setting. They are now suggestive of theatrical backdrops or film sets, anticipating an event or perhaps recording its aftermath. What remains, however, are the residual traces of a narrative; graffiti, discarded beer cans, rubbish left after a summer picnic, road works, for sale signs etc.

"The streetscapes of east and southeast London where I live are the subject of my work. I am fascinated by the hybrid of architectural styles and influence in these areas of deprivation and urban regeneration. Far from the tourist trail can be found Georgian and Victorian houses with their classical proportions and decorative motifs in varying levels of decay, fighting for attention alongside shiny new examples of contemporary urban design. The aim of my work is to breathe new life and energy into the forgotten and overlooked in these areas by uprooting specific buildings and street furniture from their everyday surroundings and creating a new setting for them to exist in, more worthy of their classical aspirations. By elevating their status in this way they are offered a new life of artificial romanticism, which realises both a connection and a sense of dislocation between a classical ideal and the deprived landscapes of London."

Frost & Reed Contemporary

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