

DAVID PRICE
DREAMLAND

6 May – 6 June 2015

In his third solo exhibition at Art First, Price presents a new series of works in which he re-imagines Piranesi's illustrations of ancient Rome as a corrupted amusement park called Dreamland.

In 2012 Price moved his studio to Margate, home of the real Dreamland. Fascinated by the ruined remains of this resort that in its heyday had been modelled on a park of the same name in Coney Island USA, he found a metaphor for the degraded concept of the 'American Dream' that once symbolised the hopes of a generation in a bright Modern future, where everyone could enjoy the rewards of labour and democracy. In our current social and political climate the dreams of a democratic, meritocratic utopia have crumbled along with the Dreamlands built to symbolise and celebrate them. Price's work privileges a choreography of architectural fragments that expose humanity's complex relations with the built environment and renders quiet, intimate, beatific scenes with apocalyptic significance.

There is more to Price's outlook than mere doom and gloom however. Piranesi's classical etchings were as much a celebration of architectural majesty and human artifice as they were a meditation on entropy and abandonment. In his contemporary 'capricci' Price infuses plenty of energy and wit amidst the ruins. The vibrant, shimmering colours and almost hologramatic off-set brushstrokes of the paintings suggest a fevered and fertile imagination.

The various tableau depicted have about them a quality of the dream-state – of magical realism. Strange temples and altars abound, side by side with funfair rides and signs. Explorers, residents, survivors... the nature of the human figures that appear in several of the works is ambiguous. Their presence though suggests an optimism about the future – and this may indeed be another reflection of the artist's immediate surroundings: the Kent coast being in the process of significant regeneration and cultural investment – a site not just of a faded past but also an intriguing and evolving future, and the backdrop for the life of the artist and his young family.

Price's studies in printmaking at the RCA (2006–9) continue to inform his primary practice of painting where each colour is painted separately, unmixed, directly onto the gesso surface. The brilliance and clarity of his imagery release astonishing details that delight the viewer only after careful observation.

David Price studied at Edinburgh College of Art before completing two MA's at Newcastle (fine art) and the Royal College of Art (printmaking). He has held a fellowship in printmaking at the Royal Academy since 2010. He was selected for the Bloomberg New Contemporaries in 2009, and first showed with AF Projects in 2010.

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