



NICOLE WERMERS, *Reiche Verwandte*, 2006. Installation view. Courtesy Herald St, London.

increasingly obvious. So this first solo show in a UK public gallery seems overdue. With this in mind, the exhibition is comprehensive, including a number of his films, as well as photographs, projections and documentary evidence of his work, and a recreation of his delicately poignant piece *Thoughts Unsaid, Then Forgotten* (1973), which includes a vase of flowers slowly dying while lit mercilessly by an angle-poised lamp.

This melancholy continues in a series of 16mm silent films shot by Ader in the early '70s, with one, *I'm Too Sad To Tell You* (1970), showing him break down in tears over an unknown tragedy. Other films see the artist pursue his fascination with falling, depicting him tumbling down a roof or into canals. The falls are wrought with tension and anticipation while he hangs precariously, and the relief after he finally lets go encourages laughter, both in gratitude at the release and in humor at the slapstick nature of the scenarios, which reference Buster Keaton and Chaplin, as well as artist Yves Klein. This jokiness seems as much a part of the work as the tragedy, and has led to speculation that his final disappearance was another elaborate performance, a continuation of the experiments he explores in the films. Whatever the reality, he has left behind a body of work that continues to impress and captivate over thirty years on.

Eliza Williams

NICOLE WERMERS

HERALD ST

A stubbed out cigarette in a swathe of white pristine sand is almost casually brutal in its nonchalance. A cigarette stubbed out on an art work is, however, frankly disturbing. In *Sand Table* (2006), German-born artist Nicole Wermers has created just such a sand pit cum artwork. Presented at waist height, this L-shaped table has the appearance of a child's sand-pit where a war game might have been conducted — or, more ominously, where a particular maneuver was plotted in order to reclaim a contested area of land. Bearing in mind the connotations associated with sand, not to mention the images of oil-wells burning — and being extinguished — in the Iraqi deserts, it would be all too easy to see in this piece a scaled down model of sorts; however, and tempting as it is, this would be far too prescriptive an approach insofar as it is in the formal eloquence of Wermers' work that we find both its meaning and its depth.

Resembling Constantin Brancusi's *Endless Column* of 1918, three painted steel constructs, *Kusine* (2006), also share the same space. When we start to consider the influence of Brancusi on artists such as Dan Flavin and Carl Andre we get closer to the intricate play on formalism mentioned above: both *Sand Table* and *Kusine* — despite their apparent non-relationship — are effectively engaging with the legacy of constructivist, modernist and, latterly, minimalist formalism. The fact that "rust" is

listed as a component of *Kusine* could also direct us towards the occasionally clumsy utopianism associated with such projects. The literal and metaphorical stand-offishness of much modernist sculpture of the '60s would appear to be both parodied and given some humanity here: these works will rust and, although I would never (of course) advocate such behavior, one day some oafish bystander may take it upon himself to stub out his cigarette on your smart modernist table. That was always the problem with the utopian aspirations that underpinned modernism: other people.

Anthony Downey

HARIS EPAMINONDA

DOMOBAAL

Engaging with the fragility of memory and its permeability by fantasy and imagination, the exotic photo-collages of the Cypriot artist Haris Epaminonda offer us a synthetic world created from the perforated, interwoven and layered fragments of documentary photographs. Sourced from '50s French lifestyle magazines, these reinvented, shimmering layers of images offer transmuted realities that resemble the nostalgic afterimages of revisited dreams. Frequently swarming with people enmeshed in scenes whose dissected and reconstructed events barely cling to credible pictorial reality, these works might best be described as having the mien of a latter-day Bosch influenced by Surrealism.

Epaminonda manually dissects, manipulates and rearranges these monochrome photographic images transforming them into a series of implausible events and scenarios wherein participant's identities are often concealed through intricate facial transplants. If engagement with identity is currently an important trope, then Epaminonda's work cuts sharply across that particular zeitgeist, her trysts with fantasy opening up infinite possibilities for the undermining and deflation of identity. The style and execution of the cutting and layering varies as the different ontologies of the different images drive the creative process. Unlike the photocollages of John Heartfield, there are no satirical or political overtones in Epaminonda's work — anarchic perhaps, ideological definitely not.

These classless and timeless aggregations of people synthetically gathered in narrative-defying, anonymous rucks act as catalysts for the more eccentric, oblique regions of the viewers imagination. Tropical palms framing icy wastes provide just one sample of a whole range of tantalizing tastes of places that don't and could never possibly exist. They nevertheless offer surprising and bizarre parallels to the often flawed ways in which we recall events and scenarios from our own lives, while the closest analogy maybe those hypnagogic visions that waylay our senses on the threshold between waking and sleeping.

Roy Exley



HARIS EPAMINONDA, *Untitled #1 (The Passers)*, 2005/06. Collage, 23 x 24 cm. Courtesy Dombaal, London.