



Chris Dolman: Bong Nose Long Socks Goes To Town

Chris Dolman is the kind of artist who inspires strange dreams. Not troubling exactly, not disturbing, but most definitely very weird. A part of it is his somewhat eccentric use of materials. They're technically described as "mixed media and collage on paper" which is straightforward enough. Lots of people do that. But somehow not quite in the way Dolman does. First off Dolman creates backgrounds that evince a painterly skill equal to any colour-field abstractionist. The surfaces seem deeply tortured, creating a sense of three-dimensional depth, a new dimension in which he can introduce his psycho-pop *mise-en-scènes*. Such depth is unusual for a collagist. In effect Dolman is creating an alternate world in which to play.

Then comes the element of collage. Again, something is askew. Clearly Dolman has an enthusiasm for Pop Art. But the pop artists, like the surrealists, while breaking many rules, also kept to some. Most collage, traditionally, sticks to a fairly simple rule – one finds and juxtaposes existing elements in order to create a striking *mélange* of imagery (see a masterpiece in this approach in Richard Hamilton's *Just What Is It That Makes Today's Homes So Different, So Appealing?*, 1956). Dolman also does that to substantial degree, but not content to dabble only in real world detritus, he often makes his own, and in doing so lays bare his fascination with such zones as geometric abstraction, the Vorticists, Paul Klee and indeed the world of painting as a whole. Having done that, he goes back to the 'rules' – introducing 'real' objects onto the already multi-layered palimpsest.

And here we get to the crux of the matter. All of this painstaking effort is executed for the sake of narrative. For within this volcanic eruption of pop whimsy Dolman introduces a cast of characters whose mysterious activities are beyond human ken. It is here we meet such personalities as Bong Nose Long Socks, a not-so-distant cousin to the perpetually stoned *South Park* character Towelie (a talking towel no less). His body is that of a modernist geometric sculpture, but everyone will recognize, even if they haven't inhaled, that his nose is made for imbibing the potent vapors within. His block of modernist carving is the stuff of potent dreams and Bong Nose Long Socks, with his long black legs and glazed gaze, will be your guide to this strange new world.

Ashley Crawford, February 2015