

David Cotterrell: The Times : Visual Art

The Times

Date: 31st July 2002

Since the epoch-making Time Machine exhibition at the British Museum, which insinuated contemporary works into the main Egyptian gallery, the idea has been taken up widely. Its latest manifestation is Diversion at the Museum of Garden History where a variety of works from the dealer Danielle Arnaud's stable of artists have been placed strategically in and around the museum's permanent collection. The idea works rather well, since most of the new works reflect, one way or another, on gardens.

Or sometimes the absence of gardens: David Cotterrell's video in a vitrine entitled Shangrila [sic] is (mischievously?) presented as a celebration of "creativity, flamboyance and quiet struggle" in the suburban garden's assertion of its owner's individuality, when in fact what it mostly shows is tiny front gardens relentlessly paved and cemented to provide parking for the owner's car. Two works are actually in the garden. Dan Howard-Birts pattern-planted installation "Sundays and Public Holidays" reflects wryly on the fact that John Tradescant the elder, the Jacobean botanist and plant collector who gives his name to the foundation controlling the museum, had no sense of smell. More alarmingly, Theo Kacoufa's One Minute to Love is an apparently normal tree that unexpectedly springs into motion every now and then.

John Russell Taylor

