

GROUP SHOWS

The World as a Stage

TATE MODERN, LONDON



Jeppe Hein, *Spiral Labyrinth*, 2006. High polished mirror plate, aludibond, metal frame, 200 x 512 x 428 cm. Courtesy Johann König, Berlin. Photo: Anders Berg. Bottom left: Mario Ybarra Jr., *Sweeney Tate*, 2007. Mixed media, dimensions variable. Courtesy Tate Modern, London.

wrong with so much of the contemporary art to be found at the Tate. It is engaging, slightly mesmerizing, and looking at it you try to convince yourself that this really might be a meditation on how human perceptions are thoroughly determined by appearances — but at bottom you know it is just a giant executive toy, black and shiny with moving parts, whose slow, steady motion produces in the viewer a meditative, soothing calm.

— Nathaniel McBride

result is yet another show confirming the Tate's already far advanced transformation from gallery to entertainment center. As such, it is not on the whole the badness of the works that strikes one — although there are some that are remarkably bad — as their extreme paucity of ambition, as if the artists in question were not only content with their role as entertainers, but could now imagine none other for themselves. It is difficult to decide who offers the worst examples of this; Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster's vacuous and familiar *Séance de Shadow II* (1998), a darkened room in which trip switches cause the visitor to illuminate a series of lights as he moves through it, or Cezary Bodzianowski's smugly superficial video *Flying Helmet* (2007), where the artist measures the exterior of the Globe Theater, then compares it with the dimensions of the real globe.

Elsewhere things looked at least a little more serious: Jeremy Deller's *The Battle of Orgreave Archive* (*An Injury to One is an*

Injury to All) (2004), offered an example of that currently most ubiquitous of movements, namely docu-art. A form borrowed directly from television, whose original function was to make factual information easily consumable to living room audiences, was always going to require some kind of radical intervention if it were ever to usefully serve the purposes of art. This Deller notably fails to do: for all its reminders and evocations of the Miners' Strike of 1984, a period of recent British history that now feels so distant, he does not successfully answer the question of its relevance to today, nor evoke any interest in it beyond the half-curious, half-distracted interest that documentary inherently generates.

Ironically the best piece in the show, Jeppe Hein's *Rotating Labyrinth* (2007) — a large, raised circular dais with two concentric circles of moving perpendicular mirrors, which produces a sense of motion in the stationary viewer — also comes closest to embodying what is



“A central theme” of this show, the Tate's press release informs us, “is the extent to which a sense of theater, or spectacle, has an impact on the gallery visitor's experience.” Such a thin pretext for an exhibition doesn't, of course, mean the show itself need be bad — and there is an obvious affinity between gallery and stage — but sadly the same shallowness of thought that went into its conception has also characterized its choice of participants. The