

LONDON: CHELSEA SPACE

IAN CARR-HARRIS

23 April – 28 May 2005

www.chelsea.arts.ac.uk

Partly drawn from the exhibition the artist had at The Power Plant in Toronto (2002), in which he wanted to establish his interest in artworks as 'levers' or active objects (in the sense that they exist to demonstrate or reveal something), Ian Carr-Harris' maiden London show has the merit of being fresh and exhaustive without falling into the trap of looking like a self-celebrative mini-retrospective. Major works like *Anachronism* (1994) or *Made in Hong Kong* (1993) – an outstanding large cabinet piece where several books are positioned back to front – confirm the artist's interest in the way we perceive art and history.

The notion of paradigm as a demonstration of how something can be seen to work, in particular, has been challenged by Carr-Harris during the years through his series of 'models' – a tool, according to the Canadian artist, by which any theory is made accessible and that consequently inevitably focuses our attention. The grey area between passively watching an object and taking it for granted, and the moment when the attention is focused and everything yields to question, is explored by Carr-Harris through an act of re-tracing objects and scanning them. An example

of this is *Tate Modern* (2005), a brand new piece realised for the exhibition that employs images of London's most iconic museum as a shell; images of something which, in effect, can be considered itself as an artwork. While the authority and power of the museum is consequently incorporated into the operation of the various works in the series, Carr-Harris also views the museum as the natural place of art, its strategically authoritative fulcrum. Power is dialectical – the power of artworks invests the museum with the authority of discourse, and of course the 'favour' is returned. After all, the museum's prerogative is clearly vested in its architecture, as Frank Gehry reminded us with the Guggenheim in Bilbao in 1997 and, a few years later, with his exhibition of 'models' of the new, and never to be, Lower Manhattan Guggenheim Museum at Frank Lloyd's rotunda (2001). The models in the paradigm series compress the power of architecture into an equivalency with our own bodily and scopic grasp of aesthetic value – something true for any such operation – and reveal the 'mechanism of power' to be at least in one respect our anticipation of conjunction.

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