

A friend of mine recently remarked how annoyed he gets it when the whole world turns red and green for Christmas.

He's not a Scrooge, my mate, just colour-blind. Even so, not for him the latest exhibition at Kingston Grammar School's Baxter Gallery.

Never Be Seen is a collection of paintings, drawings, photographs, prints and mixed media works by 10 different artists.

Few have much to do with Christmas but all are united in their festive colour scheme.

Named after that fashionista motto - "Red and green should never be seen", the show was sparked off by a throwaway comment to promoter Pete Mountford

by a West End art dealer

"He said I should think about painting more red and green works for him to sell at Christmas!" reports Mountford.

"I think he meant it half tongue-in-cheek. But at the time, I was already thinking of doing something in Kingston. I live near the Baxter Gallery and was fascinated by its glass front - people can look in on their way past and it seemed a good way to comment on the intoxication of Christmas."

As one third of Art 3 with Jane Stothert and Mary Paterson, Mountford is more used to the rarified art world of Chelsea where the trio regularly organise solo and

group shows for artists at the Wine Gallery.

The scene is rather different in Kingston. Mountford's home for the past three years, and while he singles out galleries such as the Stanley Picker for praise, he would like to see more adventurous programming in the area.

"It would be nice if it wasn't all college led. But no one's got any money. That's why we need publicity, as well as more cross-dialogue.

"People need to build up the confidence to set up on their own. It's like Damien Hirst and the Brit Art of the late 80s. You have to do it yourself."

On which note, Mountford's own contribution to Never Be Seen is This

Configuration, a collection of nine of his past pieces, all based on the old Maths teaching system, Cuisenaire rods.

"It's not a work in itself," he explains. "The closest analogy I've thought of is the music compilation. You can put old songs together in new ways on a compilation but it's hard to mount an art retrospective without it being overloaded with political elements."

Christmas is no time for politics, after all.

Never Be Seen. The Baxter Gallery, Queen Elizabeth II Building, 70 London Road, Kingston, until Monday, January 29, 2007, free entry, visit art-3.co.uk/neverbeeseen

EXHIBITIONS:
Art dealer Pete Mountford talks to Nancy Groves about Never Been Seen at the Baxter Gallery in Kingston.

THE NEWS

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Entertainment informer

YOUR ULTIMATE WEEKLY GUIDE TO WHAT'S ON

December 22, 2006

CHRISTMAS JEERS

By Robert Cumber

DON'T be fooled by the festive colours - these paintings are part of a prestigious exhibition exposing the cynical underbelly of Christmas.

All the artwork in the Never be Seen collection, now showing at Kingston's Baxter Gallery, is linked by the seasonal hues of red and green. Artist Pete Mountford, among those exhibited, was inspired to put the show together after a throw-away remark from a dealer, who told him to produce more red and green paintings to sell at Christmas.

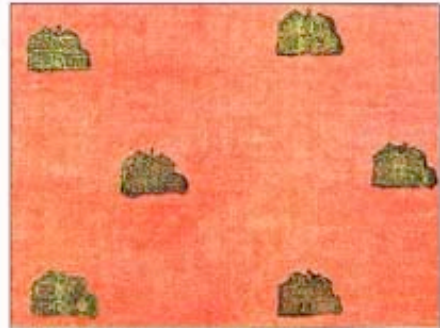
"This could be interpreted by some as a cynical attempt to exploit the psychology of the festive season, despite the fact that most of the work has very little to do with Christmas," explained the artist.

Among the 10 artists featured is Stevie Deas, whose Trees 1&2 creates a stunning double effect, similar to that suffered by grannies across the country after a few too many Christmas sherrys. The simple line drawing also refers to the huge sales of fake trees at this time of year.

Sarah Sparkes' The Maiden Over, like many of her paintings, was inspired by the fabulously grotesque wallpaper found at her adolescent drinking haunts in Reading.

Trafford Parsons' unique creations include Red Biofeld's Cat, reflecting on the cute and sinister sides to the notorious Bond villain's furry companion.

● Never be Seen runs until January 29 at the Baxter Gallery in the Queen Elizabeth II building, Kingston Grammar School, London Road, Kingston. For a detailed schedule of opening times, visit: www.art-3.co.uk/neverbeeseen.htm



DREAMING OF A BLACK CHRISTMAS? Clockwise from left: Trees 1 & 2 by Stevie Deas (simple line drawing). The Maiden Over by Sarah Sparkes, Red Biofeld's Cat by Trafford Parsons, and Cuisenaire Rods by Pete Mountford.



INSIDE: Our great sports coverage starts on p38 **PLUS:** Your guide to the weekend's TV p33-34

LIFE BEGINS WITH A SMILE.....

David Galloway

KINGSTON INFORMER

Green policies

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Never Be Seen, The Baxter Gallery, Kingston

By Nancy Groves

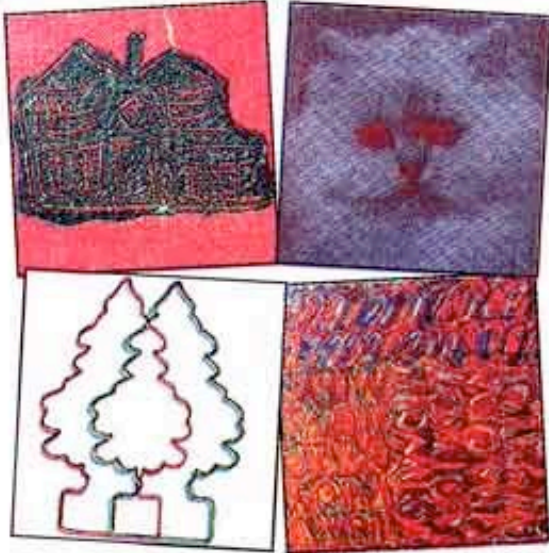
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