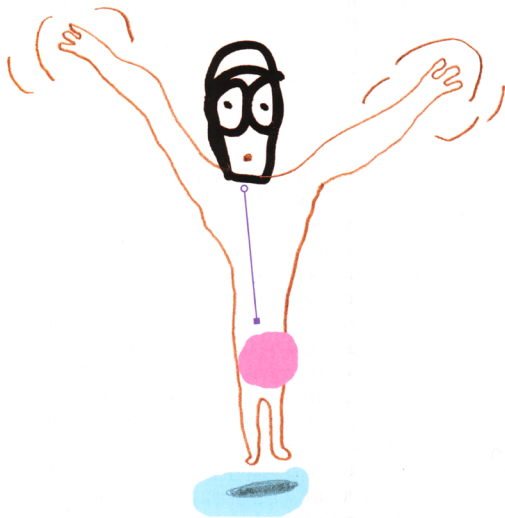


# Art Review

and grey. These apparently draw inspiration from Aldous Huxley's novel *Island* (1962), about an imagined utopian society of enlightened humans secluded from the world: the group of women seem similarly distant, almost superhuman. Whatever crystals they've been taking, it's had an effect. Pratesi's approach is part of a growing nostalgia among a current generation of artists for the more esoteric histories of Modernism, for a world in which the occult and the mystical are fused with utopian visions of radically different societies, and for secluded communities withdrawn from the troubles of the ordinary world – and Huxley is an apt figurehead for this 'other' trajectory of wayward Modernism. Pratesi's women, with their high-achiever elegance, might also tap a vein of Ayn Rand-ish ultra-individualism. These are feminist Fountainheads, looking back at us in our battered present from the serene and quite impotent confines of their perfect future.

**RAFAEL LOZANO-HEMMER**  
HAUNCH OF VENISON

Lozano-Hemmer's intelligent and very human techno-interactive geek-wizardry scores highly for how it retools and upgrades the familiar feedback techniques of multimedia art in response to the common experience of a contemporary society deeply penetrated by a culture of digital surveillance and the individual's integration into network-mediated forms of information and sociality. Plus you can wave your arms around and the art does stuff in response, which is fun. It's a winning formula. There's a sort of 'time-mirror' screen that watches you watching it and plays back and cross-fades clips



and I can't be constrained by rules and maps. Just like the guys at Dicksmith, who can't be constrained by the rule that a gallery should be a space for showing art. Which is why they've turned their space into a bar for the next five weeks (Friday nights). It's in full swing when I get there – people have gone past spilling drinks on the floor and are busy spilling drinks over each other. It's too easy to say that this is a stroke of genius, that they're probably making more money from the booze sales than they would were they using the space to sell art in these difficult times (for example, the normally underfunded art director of this magazine will later claim to have spent £80 at the place in a fit of drunken profligacy). Rather, it might be more interesting to speculate that this is a reminder that the sphere of art is an inherently sociable one (despite the fact that, unlike some of my fellow reviewers, I haven't really managed to con any friends into following me around on this trip. Perhaps that just shows how antisocial most of my friends are, though; or that in galleries I leave my socialising to exist solely between me and the art. Because I'm a professional).

**JOHN KØRNER, WAR PROBLEMS**  
VICTORIA MIRO

Once you've seen, say, Thomas Hirschhorn's or Steve McQueen's responses to Middle East conflict, Kørner's 16 watered-down acrylic paintings representing Danish soldiers killed in Afghanistan seem a little insubstantial and quaint. That said, *Danish Skeleton* (2008), an iron and ceramic sculpture on the top floor of the gallery, is like some kind of creepy reliquary from Mexico.

**Y.Z. KAMI, ENDLESS PRAYERS**  
PARASOL UNIT

I've never heard of Y.Z. Kami before. But I wish I had. The Persian-born (yep, he seems to prefer the old-fashioned terminology) New York-based artist's large-scale frontal portraits manage to find a zone between precision and blurriness that's at once striking and unsettling. I'm thinking Vaseline vision, but the gallery handout claims this relates to 'Fayum potraits' that accompanied Egyptian mummies to the grave. I know nothing about them, either, but it's to Kami's credit that this doesn't detract from the experience of seeing the work. His truly fascinating circular arrangements of cut-ups-and-outs of texts from Islamic books are really operating at once like plans for domes and labyrinths, and they have a bonelike quality that adds a strange funerary air to the proceedings.