

ALMEIDA WESTEND **HAMLET** BY WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE DIRECTED BY ROBERT ICKE HAROLD PINTER THEATRE



Ben Turnbull: No Guts No Glory at Saatchi Gallery

CULTURE | ART



ALEXANDER BAWDEN

SHOT BY EROL BIRSEN

13TH APRIL 2017

Americana is dominating the creative landscape this season, where a fascination for the US' uncertain future revolves tightly around its love of Pop Culture, as evidenced by their reality-star Commander in Chief.

Turnbull's latest foray deals with Pop Art and comic books, bringing these elements into contemporary society as a way of discussing the ethics of propaganda and patriotism. Never one to shy from controversy, he has a reputation for playful subversion that sometimes goes too far. His piece *Bubble-Gun* was scrapped after concerns it would expose children to weapons and trivialise guns in an area that suffered from youth violence.

Here, however, he is triumphant, delivering a stunning and intelligent homage to young GIs, whose lives are often reduced to glorified stories of heroism, their humanity lost as we raise them on to a pedestal. The artist has made use of "all-American" artefacts from flags, comics and uniforms, and viewers are barraged with symbols of pride and power that we associate today with recruitment ads.

Throughout the exhibition, there is an intrinsic link between masculinity and the need to fight, from the looming figure of Uncle Sam made from the faces of soldiers, to the memorial flags framed in a dark wood cross. Turnbull doesn't veer away from powerful, if rather obvious, iconography but he masterfully subverts these iconic images through the medium he uses. Meticulously cut and glued, each piece is a collage made from thousands of comic books, carefully built to create a larger image. Close inspection reveals chisel-jawed commandos, feats of bravery and battlefield banter, interspersed with silently screaming faces with tortured eyes.

It's a harrowing experience that forces its audience to consider the real world implications of war on the individuals who fight them, and it cuts pretty close to home. With the increasing prominence of brands like DC, our ideas of heroes, villains and conflict is again romanticised, and Turnbull highlights how this is a problem.

For a relatively small show, *No Guts No Glory* packs a punch that will leave viewers reeling even after they've left, and is important viewing for anyone with an interest in comics and combat.

★★★★★

Alexander Bawden

Photos: Erol Birsen

Ben Turnbull: No Guts No Glory is at Saatchi Gallery from 11th April until 8th May 2017, for further information visit [here](#).

For further information about Ben Turnbull visit [here](#).



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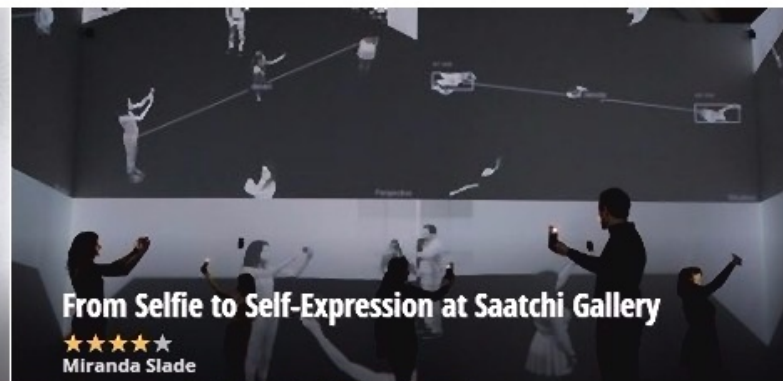
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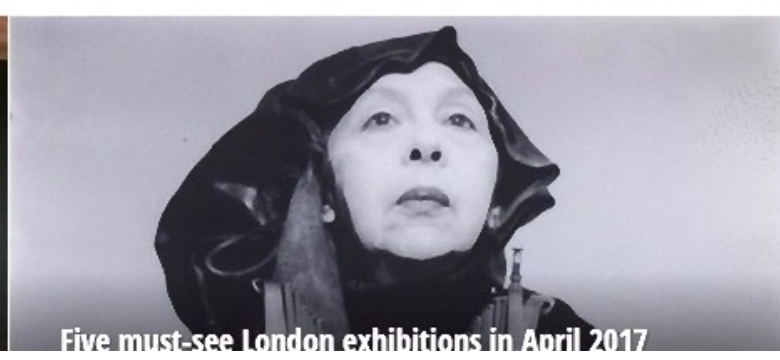
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Dates

11th April 2017 - 8th May 2017

Entry

Free

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Show

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