

# SPRING PROJECTS

**Alice Hawkins and Barnaby Barford**  
**THE GOOD, THE BAD, THE BELLE**  
**at Spring Projects**

**27th February – 5th April 2009**

PRESS RELEASE

London based photographer **Alice Hawkins** graduated from Camberwell College in 2002. Her portrait photographs span fashion and fine art; as well as exhibiting she has published work in magazines including Pop, Harper's Bazaar (US), i-D, and Big. At Spring Projects she will present an extensive selection of her photographs to date.

Alice's photographs investigate notions of glamour, life-style and aspiration; these could be described as a social commentary on how we live at the turn of the 21st Century. From Miss East Anglia competitors photographed in full regalia in their bedrooms, to page three pin-ups, and sedate society women from Russia and India, her photographs convey her ability to show real people being true about their aspirations to the camera. Alongside capturing other people's exotic lifestyles, and giving us a taste of world's the regular viewer may find hard to enter, she also produces images where she dons the role of the model, making herself the subject of her portraits; the British answer to Cindy Sherman. She raises questions of uniformity, identity and image perception, often making friends with her subjects before perfectly imitating and inhabiting their skin for a snatched second. For example, as homage to her former mentor Nick Knight, she embodies the persona of a glamorous page three girl by writing "I Heart Nick Knight" in lipstick across her bronzed midriff.

Do not be mistaken, Alice Hawkins is not being ironic with her peroxide blond hair and acrylic nails and neither are her subjects. She has an exceptional eye for the audacious or arresting image, and her works revolve around discovering aspects of what she calls the 'everyday burlesque'. Her inflection of this concept differentiates her from previous generations of photographers; her sitters happily combine the theatrical and prosaic, the exaggerated and the normative. However you also get a sense from her portraits that Alice has juxtaposed real life with fantasy, and consequently her subjects exude an ethereal presence, invariably involving us in a play of identification with and alienation from her subjects. Alice's sitters express their singularity of character, which extends to every detail of their personae from sartorial tastes to expression and posture.

Women in her images often appear either brazenly sexualized or unfeasibly genteel. In this series of work we bounce between the confrontational and the charming, the demure and the titillating, the luxuriant and the kitsch. As a body of images together, they embody what Alice finds attractive – and a set of characteristics not normally represented in fashion or in art. The artist never photographs models, preferring to only shoot 'people who enjoy being photographed', and whose pleasure in dressing up is palpable to the viewer. Her characters can possess such an overwhelming individuality that it can obscure the fact we might read them as emblematic of wider social processes.

About herself Hawkins says; "I'm attracted to glamour and beauty. It's because of who I am, what I know and where I live. I love all that sparkles and shines. I love it when people have made an effort, [and to] photograph glamorous people, [to] celebrate them and show them off. Deep down I'd like to be super glamorous myself and I am constantly using my photography to play with this idea. I have a...dream that when I'm 50 I will get a big boob job and extensions just like Dolly Parton (who's my inspiration). It's like Essex meets country and Western meets LA".

**Barnaby Barford** presents a new body of work at Spring Projects, which combines a new series of ceramic sculptures and his film, *Damaged Goods*.

Working primarily with found, mass-produced ceramic figurines and objects, Barford chops and changes them, adding pieces on and gluing them together to create sinister and deeply sardonic narrative sculptures. Porcelain figurines were created for storytelling, so you could say that Barnaby Barford takes them at face value. Since 2004 he has created narrative groupings of cute but kitsch figures, antique and current, and then twisted viewers' expectations with darkly comic titles. "Wait until I get home, they're going to go crazy," says a doe-eyed Snow White, who on second glance has (thanks to Barford and a bit of modeling clay) a massively enhanced chest. While earlier work relied very much on what Barford calls "human frailty" – vanity, greed and so on – recent pieces also tackle current social issues, from female binge drinking to happy slapping. Barford's world, in the Hogarthian tradition, is a very imperfect place on which he turns a satirical eye. His new series of ceramic pieces raises questions of lost childhood and family values in today's society, often with quite violent results. These works are set in contrast to his co-exhibitor Alice Hawkins, as if directing us to remember that beneath the glamour of popular culture lurks uncomfortable class contrasts and awkward social aspiration.

*Damaged Goods*, Barnaby's ambitious first film, tells the sinister tale of two china figurines who meet in a china shop and fall in love. Inevitably, the course of true love – between a cut-price boy figure and an upmarket porcelain beauty – does not run smoothly, and there are breakages along the way. As with his porcelain set pieces, Barford somehow sidesteps mawkishness through fabulous production values, humour and an almost instant likeability. The subtext of *Damaged Goods* is a battle between high and low culture, but rather than wagging the finger of cultural theory at us, Barford prefers to make his audience saddened or to smile. Reminiscent of Arthur Melbourne-Cooper's 1908 film *A Dream of Toyland*, where a boy dreams that all his new toys come to life, *Damaged Goods* conveys a dark intent beneath its apparent innocence and humour. Using stop frame animation, these figurative 'ready-mades' move beyond Duchamp and Koons, by way of the uncanny of Svankmajer and the Brothers Quay. The work treads a fine balance between the kitsch and the knowing.

Barnaby Barford (b.1977) lives and works in London. Since graduating from the Royal College of Art in 2002 he has exhibited internationally, with shows in London, Miami and Japan as well as across Europe. Barford was awarded Wallpaper\* Young Designer of the Year 2004.

The artists' link their work at Spring Projects through seeking uncelebrated subjects and objects, which are often overlooked, and remodeling them. Barnaby says "I think the [show's] title represents the hopes and aspirations of the individual characters within all the work, whether they are, or want to portray themselves as good, or bad or beautiful".

**For Press information and images and general further information please contact:**

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Opening hours: Tuesday to Wednesday 10am – 5pm, Thursday – Friday 12pm – 7pm, Saturday 11am – 4pm.

***Damaged Goods* will be screened in Springs' cinema on Saturdays throughout the exhibition.**

[www.springprojects.co.uk](http://www.springprojects.co.uk)



DAVID GILL GALLERIES

**Editor's notes:**

Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art is currently hosting a solo exhibition of Alice's work entitled The Female Gaze from 5 December 2008 - 7 February 2009. For further information please contact Alistair Robinson, at [Alistair.Robinson@sunderland.gov.uk](mailto:Alistair.Robinson@sunderland.gov.uk)

Damaged Goods is an Animate Projects commission for Channel 4 in association with Arts Council England. The presentation of Damaged Goods at Spring Projects follows its broadcast on Channel 4 as part of the AnimateTV programme.

Barnaby Barford's new body of work is shown in partnership with Animate Projects and David Gill Galleries London. He currently teaches at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design.

Spring Projects is a self-contained, custom-built commercial gallery situated on the ground floor of Spring Studios, which provides a much needed platform for experimental work across the fields of art, design and fashion. The gallery's programme regularly set these disciplines alongside fine art taking a broad cultural view. Spring Projects aims to present a coherent fusion and convergence of the contemporary by hosting exemplary practitioners across these fields. Contemporary artists and designers whose reference is popular culture in its broadest sense have energised a new discourse between the worlds of art, fashion and design, one defined less by subjects than by attitude. Spring Projects aims to push the dialogue between these fields a little further on – and provide a consistent commercial platform from which to highlight outstanding work.