

London Lowdown

Art Review Uwe Wittwer: Raised Hide ★★★★★☆

Housed in the former residence of the Museum of Mankind, Haunch of Venison has proved a natural home for brooding artists exploring dark themes – and in presenting Uwe Wittwer, the gallery has really hit its stride.

The lesser-known Swiss artist deals in found images, here offering a new body of watercolours and digital ink-jet prints based on vintage photographs and the work of old masters such as Friedrich, Poussin and Ruisdael.

Despite relying on the internet to source images, Wittwer comes across as an artist fascinated by the past and the way we perceive and remember it visually. So an old photo of a group of classmates (1945, pictured) is rendered unfamiliar through a watercolour wash, while a family snapshot reveals sinister undertones as the artist manipulates the focus, highlighting piercing eyes and erasing expressions.

Arguably, by appropriating these traditionally cosy pictures, Wittwer is drawing attention to the malleability of images of the mind's eye or perhaps the observer's desire to distort meaning. There's certainly much to contemplate.

For those less suited to serious input, there are moments of subtle humour as Wittwer borrows shots of suburban interiors from Foxton's estate agents and Hitchcock's *Rear Window* in a gentle comment on voyeurism.

It's this light touch, as well as the surface value of the artist's haunting figurative painting and painterly prints, that feed warmth into what could have been an overly po-faced meditation on the value of the image. Ultimately, a confirmation that contemporary art can be both pleasing and satisfying.

Zena Alkayat

Sat 10am to 6pm, free. Tel: 020 7495 5050. www.haunchofvenison.com
Tube: Piccadilly Circus



Until Oct 3, Haunch of Venison, Mon to