

TALK OF THE TOWN

Openings,
closings, people
and places



HIDDEN ART

Relish the junk

From the outside, it doesn't look like much. A nasty, cheap hotel on Cheshire Street in east London; the kind that probably rents by the hour. But a queue is steadily forming. Before we enter, we have to sign a disclaimer – just in case we come crawling out of Christophe Büchel's latest installation *Simply Botfiful* with broken limbs or gaping wounds. The National Gallery, it ain't – but thankfully, London's most fascinating artspace, Hauser & Wirth Coppermill, isn't trying to be.

Up the stairs, we've walked into the transient hotel of Büchel's imagination: the rooms overflowing with mattresses and filth. Loud music plays from 1980s stereos, the air hangs heavy with dust and abandonment. Scattered make-up and perfume in one room, signifiers of some fictional, seedy inhabitant.

But nothing can prepare you for the moment when the hotel ends, and opens up into an immense, dank warehouse filled with the detritus of human lives. A pile of old computers, 12 feet high. A caravan pasted with hardcore porn. Another with tables and chairs, and the remnants of a fried breakfast, half-eaten – while a television blares from a corner. Holes in the floor lead to underground bunkers; in the ceiling, to a room full of Hebrew texts.

A world away from the public, acceptable face of contemporary art, this is art that aims for the jugular. There are moments in Büchel's uncanny, apocalyptic installation that inspire genuine fear in the participant – but also excitement. For want of a better cliché, walking into *Simply Botfiful* is like stepping into a different world. It ends next Sunday and you simply must see it. **LS**

Hauser & Wirth Coppermill (020 7287 2300)