

Reviews

Martin Creed

Hauser & Wirth *West End*

Martin Creed's work is often defiantly neither one thing nor another. Think of his 2001 Turner Prize-winning 'The lights going on and off' in which the lights stay on and off for the same duration. Occupying the ground floor here, 'Balls' appears to reprise an earlier exercise in equilibrium, 'Half the air in a given space' – a room half-filled with balloons. But mathematical logic has been replaced by an unsettling conceptual looseness. The new piece is governed by a single rule; every ball should be different. Scattered across the floor are footballs and beach balls in dozens of patterns and colours, scores of marble-sized rubber bouncers and several huge inflatables that anchor the installation. Then come spheres – a Christmas decoration, a Space Hopper – that aren't balls at all. An adult ball pool (in which you could get high on the smell of plastic), the

piece flaunts disorder – as if Creed wants to blow apart the simple structures that characterise his work to date.

Upstairs are monochromes created by covering sheets of paper with lurid highlighters and dark marker pens. There's an ambiguous message here too. If Creed wants us to see everything as both highlighted and erased (suggesting an inability to make judgements), what should we make of the neon 'Love' sign on an adjacent wall? Does it imply that devotion requires blanket (false) vision?

This may suggest an artist straining against his own conventions, but 'Elevator ooh/ahh up/down' is vintage Creed. Press the call button in the first floor lobby and you hear muffled song. Once inside the lift all becomes clear; as you glide downwards, you hear a four-part harmony sliding through a major-chord chromatic scale. The journey may be short, but it restores your faith and brings a smile to your face. *Martin Coomer*

