



Jens Ziehe

Playing by the rules: Genzken's trick in works such as Couple (above) is to arrange articles of junk according to traditional principles

Perfect art for today

NOT since Robert Rauschenberg has an artist captured the look and feel, the appearance and textures of the age as Isa Genzken does today. The 60-year-old German artist was at one time the wife of abstract painter Gerhard Richter, but their styles are at opposite poles.

Genzken makes collages and sculptures with a bizarre vocabulary of found objects and materials, which include large sheets of coloured acetate, holographic patterned and mirror-tiled paper, wrapping tape, fluorescent spray paint, dolls and designer Perspex furniture, curtain cords and tassels, plus the odd car windscreen, porcelain figurine, industrial trolley and mountaineering harness.

At first sight it looks makeshift, but Genzken's trick is to arrange this assortment of junk according to the traditional rules of modernist sculpture and abstract painting.

The tour-de-force here is a tall vertical sculpture of intersecting cheap metal curtain poles, each ending in a kitschy fluted finial, interspersed with an array of stainless steel soap dishes and sieves — a work of constructivist discipline that would impress

EXHIBITION

Isa Genzken

Hauser & Wirth, W1

★★★★★

BEN LEWIS

Tatlin. This is one of the large "architectural models" on the gallery's top floor — proposals for structures which she thinks should replace the Twin Towers in New York. They include a hospital, which appears to be a skyscraper, perched on a coffee trolley, wrapped

in ribbons and surmounted by a huge vase of flowers. Fabulously weird but also somehow plausible. Nor is this just a formal exercise — Genzken's mannequins, masks and toy tanks contain stories about domestic and sexual violence, and militarism.

Against one wall, the artist has written in large script: "Can there ever be enough medication?" It's a cool motto that captures the manic intensity of this show, casts a critical shadow over the distracting shininess of the artist's surfaces and serves well for our world today, the Prozac generation, but it may also be an elliptical autobiographical allusion.

Child-like and hilarious, crazed and perverse, measured and disciplined, contemporary art simply doesn't get more culturally relevant or more psychologically honest than this.

■ **Until 17 May. Open Tues-Sat 10am-6pm. Information: 020 7287 2300. www.hauserwirth.com**

Crazed and perverse: Disco Soon (Ground Zero), one of Genzken's proposed replacements for the Twin Towers

