

fast and loose (my dead gallery), London 1956–2006 at Fieldgate Gallery, London

While London was abuzz with the Frieze Art Fair, this small yet important show opened to far less fanfare. Cobbled together from the ephemera of now-deceased avant-garde or even radical galleries, publications, and an artist-run television show, it was presented as an injunction to current galleries to “fail again, fail better.” Given the enormous differences in size and spectacle, mentioning this show along with Frieze might seem ridiculous, but during my visit I couldn’t help being reminded that the now-vital commercial enterprises at the behemoth across town will one day meet the same fate. And in this context, the remnants of the fifteen projects that were part of “fast and loose”—including Indica, the Women’s Art Library, *Make*, and BANK—felt at once ghostlike and as timely as ever.

The exhibition presented each organization through separate installations, some symbolic (a square configuration of *Make* magazines on the floor resembled a tombstone), others theatrical. NeTWork 21, a pirate television station that broadcast in 1986 for a brief five months, was remembered through video installations and Xeroxed flyers pasted to the gallery’s windows just as they once appeared on the city’s walls. The makeshift basement space of London Free School (1966) was evoked by an old mattress onto which copies of its short-lived publication were strewn. The



Installation view: “fast and loose (my dead gallery), London 1956–2006,”
Fieldgate Gallery, London. Courtesy The Centre of Attention

small press workfortheeyetodo (1992–98) was remembered by a photograph of its offices from which a skewed table emerged, on which copies of the press’s publications were presented. These included Thomas Clark’s “Some Alternatives to The White Cube” (1996), in which he calls for a new type of space, one that “has been ordered and reordered many times but where no order is thought to be absolute,” “a space where risks are taken,” “a space like a clearing in the woods.”

In one of two rooms dedicated to the Gallery (1972–78) hung six large photographs of other galleries’ booths at the 1973 Cologne Kunstmarkt, after which the Gallery’s directors remodeled their space. A book of photographs of Frieze 2006 sat on a table in that room, a subtle reminder of how truly prescient the Gallery’s project really was.

—*Sarah Andress*