

SKETCH CALLS itself "a centre, a lieu, a destination for food, art and drink". It is an opulent "lifestyle" stage set arranged over two floors of a sumptuous 18th-century house in Conduit Street, Mayfair. Even the loos look like spangly artworks.

In the darkened gallery space are four video projections by the Swedish-born artist Annika Larsson. Born in Stockholm in 1972, Larsson now lives and works in New York. She has shown in all the prestigious and hip places: the Venice Biennale, Art Basel, in Turkey and Mexico as well as the US, Sweden, London and Berlin.

In *Mythologies*, the French philosopher Roland Barthes talked of semiology as a science of forms. "It can", he wrote, "consist of modes of writing or of representations; not only written discourse, but also photography, cinema, reporting, sport, shows, publicity, all these can serve as a support to mythical speech... Pictures become a kind of writing as soon as they are meaningful..."

The pictures and signs examined by Larsson in her video *New Gravity* are mainly

VISUAL ARTS

Annika Larsson: New Gravity

Sketch

London

★★★★☆

male. She is concerned with the ritualistic behaviour and aesthetics of what she calls "the geek look", the sort of preppy Gap-wear of shorts, white T-shirts and denim shirts favoured by certain adolescent middle-class boys. These are fetishised as she hones in on the boys' socially awkward movements, their short haircuts, spots, face-fuzz and glasses. All this is set against a background of flashing lights and a thumping disco beat.

These youths have become objects of not only a post-feminist but also a homoerotic gaze though, it has to be said, they have about as much sexual charge as a pair of smelly student trainers.

Part of the way through the video, a 3-D animated man enters the proceedings and interacts with one of the boys. Elements of fantasy and danger

are suggested in a series of arbitrary moves that defy gravity and suggest the illusion of weightlessness. Feet seem very important, whether rubbing up against hairy legs in white towelling sports socks or dangling in space like those of someone who has just hanged himself.

But a narrative is never made explicit. Glitzy and seamless in its production, the piece might be a new advertisement for Benetton or designer footwear. The world that Larsson excavates is a subculture of fashion and the music industry. She has said that "the people I use in my works, rather than creating characters, become figures lacking in individual history or depth." She seems to offer the fact as celebration rather than as critique.

There is something terribly depressing about this work, this conformity where fashion is about belonging to an identifiable yet pointless group, where synthetic desire is generated by the pulse of electronic music and computer animation rather than by actual people.

SUE HUBBARD

To Saturday (0870 777 4488)