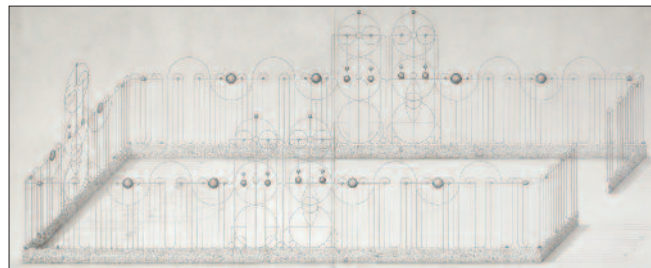


On one level, London-based Noble's work comments on the English tradition of urban planning and "new towns" erected on city outskirts after World War II. The show's tour de force, a 20-panel drawing called *Welcome to Nobson*



Paul Noble, *Hell*, 2009, pencil on paper, 48" x 119⁷/₈". Gagosian.

Paul Noble

Gagosian London

Paul Noble creates pencil-on-paper drawings of a fictional place called Nobson Newtown, where everything is familiar but somehow unintelligible. Park benches and tidy garden walks are adorned with balls and chains, stuffed garbage bags, and body parts. At the playground, the slides have been expanded into long,

steep death chutes. Fantastical sculptures that resemble Henry Moore pieces or human excrement stand on pedestals. The walls of an enormous brick labyrinth have been topped with jagged glass shards, and strange figures dance around a mushroom cloud. These works combine a dark sense of humor with the dense detail of Hieronymus Bosch.

(2008–10), twists that vision of civic progress into a dystopian nightmare that the viewer beholds from above, with all elements seeming to be equally distant, in the style of city-planning diagrams or maquettes. We could be looking at a day in the life of an English village, or, on a deeper level, *Welcome to Nobson* could stand for the strange, obsessive mind of an artist.

Noble borrows individual elements from that seminal work and uses them in smaller-scale studies of doom, such as *Hell* (2009), in which the inferno is an enclosure ringed by a creepy-cute ornamental park fence. Two large, sensuous sculptures in pink marble suggest the human form as genitalia, showing how this brilliant draftsman can shift with aplomb into three dimensions.

A second room featured more sculptures and another drawing with a doomsday mix of violence, captivity, and mass consumption, called *Ah* (2010). The excrementlike figures in earlier works have turned white and sprouted eyes and mouths. They resemble Philip Guston's Klansmen, though the graphic quality is cruder and more cartoonish than in Noble's other works. —Roger Atwood



Gerhard Richter, *Abstract Painting (Abstraktes Bild)*, 1990, oil on canvas, 36¹/₂" x 49¹/₂". Tate Modern.