

Going Out What's On Around Town

Art The Hitcher And Mo'lasses IV

The two artists launching shows at City Gallery this weekend offer a contrast of styles and themes but, despite working in disparate mediums, they are united by a desire to confound myths.

Leicester-based Chris Coekin's photographs document his hitchhiking exploits around the UK, setting out from the Eyres Monsell estate in Leicester with his thumb outstretched in search of the mythic freedom of the wide open road. He offers portraits of those he meets on this rather unglamorous quest (pictured), which takes in near identical verges as far apart as Armagh and Aberystwyth.

London-based Philomena Francis, meanwhile, remakes her signature work, Mo'lasses, as a series of large-scale drawings of black women made directly on to the Georgian wallpapered gallery partitions using the richly scented and historically freighted treacle that gives her work its double-entendre title. Francis is fascinated with the creative use of different media, with the rough canvas used in her Brown Sugar Series standing in for the sacks used to transport sugar from Jamaica.

If Coekin is out to season the legend of Jack Kerouac's *On The Road* with a pinch of harsh – and

very British – reality, Francis unravels the complex connections between sugar, slavery and female sexuality in works where the scent of her chosen medium seems as evocative as the images.

Respectively debunking assumptions about the liberty of open-ended travel and the sensual freedom of black women, Coekin and Francis find themselves sharing the common ground of sceptical inquiry. *Wayne Burrows*

Tomorrow until Jun 6, City Art Gallery, 90 Granby Street, Leicester, Tue to Fri 11am to 6pm, Sat 10am to 5pm, free. Tel: 0116 223 2060. <http://tinyurl.com/cch9sw>

