

The annexe

Peter Davies
PREMONITION

15 November – 16 December 2018

Opening preview: Wednesday 14 November, 6–9pm

These collages have grown out of two recent series of work, in which I made paintings that mimicked the appearance of collages but were made in a way that was flat-surfaced and hard-edged. The paintings were produced using a method of laying out cut or torn paper onto an overhead projector and projecting the shadows onto canvases installed on my studio wall. I was struck by how such a simple technique could result in a considerable transformation of material into image, while providing various evocative associations for the viewer. After my show RITES at The Approach in 2015, I realised I wanted to increase the way in which emotion manifested itself within my work. With the paintings following the RITES series (and after working only in monochrome for a few years), this was achieved by the reintroduction of colour to my practice, as a way to incite different emotional responses.

My education plays a significant part in the development of my work. Studying at Goldsmiths in the mid-1990s, I felt the inclusion of emotion in paintings was frowned upon. This meant that paintings had to be 'idea paintings' and art couldn't be expressive. My present understanding of painting has been enhanced by my role teaching at a London art school, where I have been afforded the privilege of witnessing numerous students not only making paintings but questioning the medium. I have learned a great deal from them. I still want to retain a conceptual underpinning to my practice, but the way in which I was taught now seems restrictive and short-sighted in consideration of the multifarious requirements that the activity of making paintings demands. At this point in time it seems that – to make a painting – one is always confronted by the complexity of what already exists, which then needs a highly nuanced response.

In the face of all this, these collages provide me the opportunity to reduce what I do to the most essential thing it needs to be. They are impulsive, honest and direct. The simplicity and immediacy of the technique allows me to sidestep the concerns I have about needing to consciously reference the weight of history. Earlier works, like my 'Text Paintings', confronted that history with a different type of honesty by including it as content within the work. The Text Paintings appeared to be about what the words said, but for me they were abstract paintings with the letters functioning similarly to abstract shapes. They were paintings of lists rather than painted lists. Subsequent paintings functioned as propositions which embodied the idea of painting and were made in similar ways to the lists, with areas drawn out and filled in. Any gesture, and likewise expression or emotion, was mediated.

These collages continue from that way of working but their technique and materiality allow an added degree of emotion and gesture. The delicate abjection of torn and painted paper gives me the opportunity to make something visceral and intuitive, which is both modest and aggressive. In foregrounding the handmade nature of these works and how that emphasises my touch, I am excited by the resulting mistakes, glue marks, damaged bits, and by my limited control of how the paper tears. The entire series has been made with standard size A4 paper. A ubiquitous and universally familiar format and material. I like the everyday, throwaway, office-associated quality of this material, which is easily available. And whilst we all recognise it as having certain associations, it can still be used as something that can be made into an object with broader and sophisticated aesthetic references. In this exhibition, the collages are stuck straight to the wall unframed. It's important to me on this occasion that the viewer can have an intimacy with them and consider the shortfalls and fragility of how they're made.

The action of making one of these collages is equivalent to making a painting. Presently, my primary interest is in making abstract paintings. There was a time when I questioned the contemporary viability of that as an activity, however I'm now enthused by the challenges it brings. Collage gives me the chance to make images which surprise

The annexe

me. I want to make something that I couldn't just draw by hand from my head. The paper has a resistance to being cut and torn which generates results I find strange and awkward.

When I started making these it was purely impulsive. Initially they weren't intended as finished works. The more of them I made, and the pleasure that gave me, made me realise that they were significant to me as standalone works. The compositions also offer possibilities for future paintings.

– Peter Davies, November 2018

Peter Davies (b. Edinburgh, 1970) lives and works in London.

Coinciding with Peter Davies: *PREMONITION*, The Approach will also be presenting
Hun Kyu Kim: *Eight Universes and The Machine*.

For further information or images please contact Jędrzej Nyka: jedrzej@theapproach.co.uk