

David Ainley
Iain Andrews
Amanda Ansell
Karl Bielik
Day Bowman
Julian Brown
Simon Carter
Deb Covell
Lucy Cox
Gordon Dalton
Pen Dalton
Natalie Dowse
Fiona Eastwood
Nathan Eastwood
Susie Hamilton
Suzanne Holtom
Barbara Howey
Phil Illingworth
Linda Ingham
Paula MacArthur
David Manley
Enzo Marra
Paul Newman
Stephen Palmer
Ruth Philo
Freya Purdue
James Quin
Katherine Russell
Molly Thomson
Judith Tucker
Joanna Whittle
Sean Williams

contemporary british painting yes/no

Introduction

A CBP virtual open studio

contemporarybritishpainting.com/yes-no

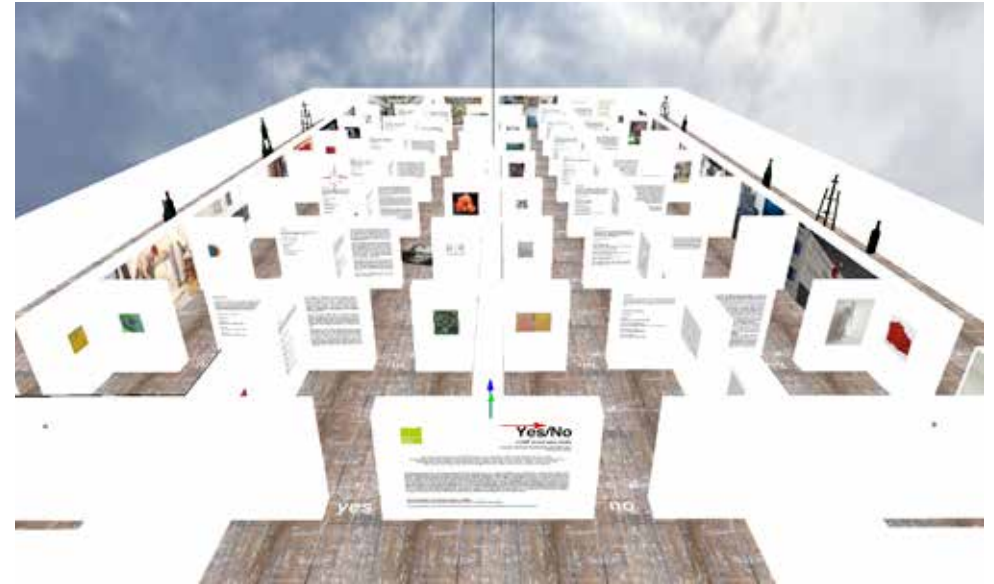
Curated by Deb Covell, Paula MacArthur and Judith Tucker

Built by Isaac Ashby

David Ainley, Iain Andrews, Amanda Ansell, Karl Bielik, Day Bowman, Julian Brown, Simon Carter, Deb Covell, Lucy Cox, Gordon Dalton, Pen Dalton, Natalie Dowse, Fiona Eastwood, Nathan Eastwood, Susie Hamilton, Suzanne Holtom, Barbara Howey, Phil Illingworth, Linda Ingham, Paula MacArthur, David Manley, Enzo Marra, Paul Newman, Stephen Palmer, Ruth Philo, Freya Purdue, James Quin, Katherine Russell, Molly Thomson, Judith Tucker, Joanna Whittle, Sean Williams

This catalogue accompanies an online, virtual open studio which brings together 32 of the Contemporary British Painting members from around the UK into this imagined and labyrinthine studio complex. Each painter has their own space in this virtual studio and you can explore their work in progress and working environment.

The show considers unresolved, unfinished or recalcitrant works, paintings which still ask questions of their makers, these works have not yet answered Yes or No but still say Maybe. The title of the show is taken from Gerhard Richter's reference to his working process as a series of Yes/ No decisions with a final Yes to end it all. The work included focuses on the kind of decisions that all painters undertake when embarking on a painting, from the initial idea stage to the resolved and exhibited work, you will see revealed some of the uncertain moments that paintings go through, an insight into the layered time consuming process that so often lies hidden underneath that final Yes decision. The works bring painting as thought to the fore. Whatever idiom these painters use, they have all taken a risk, they have chosen to place an uncertain work into the public domain, paintings which are in-between, still open ended and fluid with that unpredictable final Yes still to come.



Yes/no virtual gallery screenshot

Experiencing a painter's studio might usually be a physical and messy experience so this time why not enjoy floating through what is a blend of video game and virtual show? In each studio space you're given a yes/no choice of two further doors to step through, but it's an open studio in more ways than one - so you'd better check the weather forecast, you may need an umbrella and please wash your hands before entering.

Judith Tucker, August 2020

Visit the virtual open studio online from 11am on Thursday 6 August

contemporarybritishpainting.com/yes-no

David Ainley

My works are usually made very slowly, sometimes over years. I research landscapes that have been mined but where the evidence of this at surface is often overlooked by casual viewers who see only uneven ground. The 'Veins' in my titles refer to the location of minerals. The Derbyshire landscape in which I live was extensively mined by people who worked in cramped underground spaces using short-handled picks to cut into hard rock at a distance of about a handspan a day in their search for valuable galena, lead ore. This exploration, systematic but involving elements of chance, has its equivalents in the making of paintings. I draw through panels with saws and drills in an attempt to thoroughly integrate drawing into painting. Mostly I paint only in monochrome layers of different colours. Through each of these I inscribe numerous horizontal lines with a hand-held blade before re-painting in a process of repeated destruction and revelation. The resulting surfaces hold myriad flecks of colour indicative of the underlying history of the work. W.H. Auden, following Paul Valéry, remarked that poems were never finished, only abandoned. Mines that have been deserted are sometimes re-opened in the hope of finding new wealth, sometimes different minerals. Many of my paintings exist in a state of anticipation that I will re-visit them, others remain settled having achieved some 'object-quality' that resonates with my feelings about the labour and landscape that engages me.





North of Leys Farm (Veins) (Work in progress)
60.5cm x 60.5cm. 2019-2020



Rantor, Goodluck, Greymare, Dinah, George, Bage (Veins) (Work in progress)
Acrylic on sawn through cradled panel. 60.5cm x 60.5cm. 2017-2020

Iain Andrews

These two paintings have sat around the studio for several months now and during lockdown, since my studio and home are the same place, I have plenty of or perhaps too much opportunity to scrape away, add, sand down, scrub off, repaint and re assess these. I wonder now if they will ever be 'finished'.

“‘Oh dear!’ said poor Niggle, beginning to weep. ‘And it’s not even finished!’
‘Not finished!’ said the Driver. ‘Well, it’s finished with, as far as you’re concerned, at any rate. Come along!’.”

Leaf by Niggle J R R Tolkien





Prophet in the Wilderness (Elijah) unfinished
Oil and acrylic on canvas, 90 x 150cm, 2020



The Last Men unfinished
Acrylic on sawn through cradled panel, 60.5cm x 60.5cm, 2017-2020

Amanda Ansell

It's a question of how many layers? What are the forms or lines of paint that I judge to be noteworthy, and what can I lose as part of this balancing act? How effective are previous marks and brushstrokes in linking up and intermixing? Have I reached a formative harmony with what is currently represented?

The gestures and curved lines in diluted oil paint reference drawings or quick sketches. The teaser is; how do I transfer and make solid my chosen gestures in paint so that their final formation and the method of making, eventually comes to a close? At the beginning, I have an idea of the painting's destination and I discover early on in my process the things that don't work very well. There's an obsessive need to discover what transparent colours in synthesis present a lure, so they create the best qualities which I've not realised before.

Finding a continuous formation from an existing line or shape is a recent change in my practice. I take my initial sketches and transform these further into a looped line drawing. I've started to think more about the dogma of ritual, rehearsal, and the infinite. Trial and error canvases can contain several hesitant layers, painted over many months. They become what I'd call 'scruffy' paintings but there's something really satisfying about having works like these lying around the studio – there's an energetic tension between these and the more finished paintings.





Untitled
Oil on canvas, 30x28cm, 2020



Untitled
Oil on canvas, 30x30cm, 2020

Karl Bielik

I am a painter, I work on canvas, linen, panels and paper. I work exclusively in oil paint on thirty or so paintings and drawings at once and these vary in scale from intimate to large. The studio is the place where practically everything happens for me occasionally diagrams from medical books or photographs I have taken may inform the work in its formative stages, but essentially my work emerges from the physical process of painting.

Loose oily wounds and thick emulsions offset light glazes and dribbles, I paint, wipe out, paint over, turn the canvasses around, print, blot, mask, pour paint, scrape and scratch. Irregular canvases, panels and paper litter my studio walls and tables. I shift from one piece to another and don't focus on completion, just nudging a painting from one position to another.

Only when I am in the studio standing in front of the work do they begin to take form, I give them room to develop meaning to be here in the world. I am in there almost every day and there is little thought process outside of the studio. The works are sometimes not touched for weeks or months, which offers an incubation time to contemplate where I want them to go, them to take me or if they become complete. In contrast to my sometime emotive imagery, banal solitary words form my titles, tempering and balancing the melancholy character of my work.





Untitled 3
Oil on canvas, 46x36cms, 2020-



Untitled 2
Oil on canvas, 40 x 35cms, 2020-

Day Bowman

My working process for large scale works is pretty much the same as for the smaller canvases or works on paper. Initially, it's all about mapping out the surface: this can be done using large sticks of charcoal and/or large paint brushes with thinned down paint. Once areas have been established I fill blocks of colour whilst simultaneously drawing with charcoal into the wet paint. This whole process allows ideas to flow and develop without too much concern about the outcome. Wiping back and using a scraper (like Richter) are all part of the process of yes-ing and no-ing. If I'm honest the work can change completely in one morning and this can often be the point where I walk away from the canvas and let it breathe and tell its story.





Citadel 5, detail
Oil, charcoal and conte on canvas, 170 x 175 x 3 cm, 2020



Citadel 5, detail
Oil, charcoal and conte on canvas, 170 x 175 x 3 cm, 2020

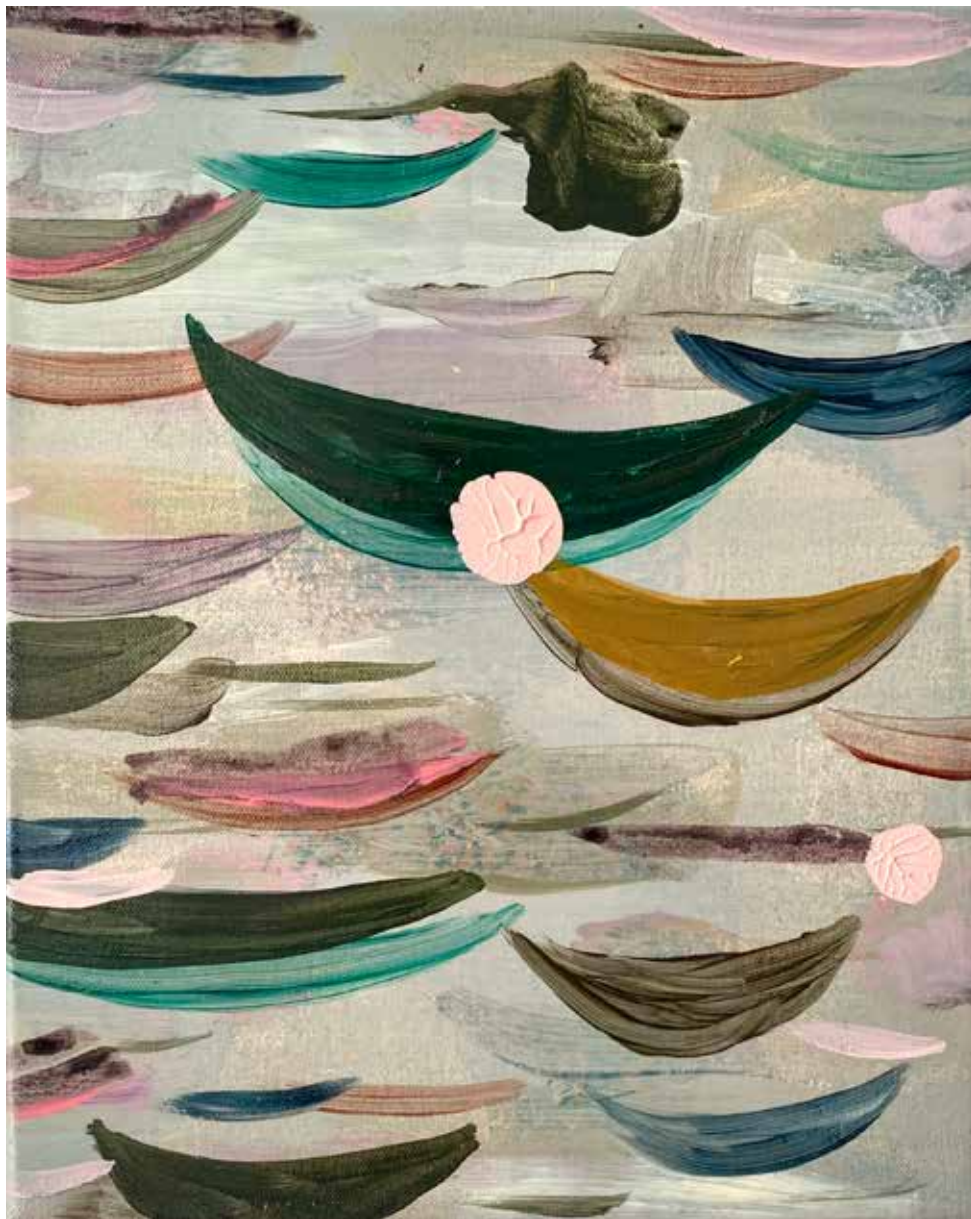
Julian Brown

My work is usually held together through systems, grids and colours that build the work into a crescendo, where the painting begins to inform you of its own ending. Sometimes however these paintings never give back, then my work tends to go on a blind search for something new or unknown. Often arbitrating the painting through sanding and wiping to a pool of muck, at this time I have the feeling that this is the worst and best of my painting at the same time.

In this series of paintings shown I'm searching for a new beginning, freedom of the imposed systems and the excitement of the unexpected.



Studio view



Portrait Sea
Acrylic on canvas, 25 x 20cm



The Hulls
Acrylic on canvas, 50x40cm

Simon Carter

There is a place where the seawall wraps around three sides of a small inlet. I like the way it seems unnecessary and the way it contains the comings and goings of the tide. It is a place where all sorts of things accumulate at high water. The drawings and paintings are about that long walk around the edge of an empty space, and how can I construct something with an empty centre, but a centre that still has presence? There are no particular discernible features in the landscape, so how do I make the painting work just through the act and force of painting?





Drawing
Charcoal and pastel, 42 x 48cm, 2020



Painting
Acrylic on paper, 60 x 66cm, 2020

Deb Covell

As a child, I remember melting Crayola crayons onto old warm radiators and the feeling of delight as I watched these solid coloured sticks slip around and magically transform into a luscious liquid substance. That was to be the start of a love affair with paint which has never ceased - in fact it has blossomed into a life-long commitment to this sensual, remarkable medium which manages to house the many different strands of my practice. I have discarded traditional supports such as paper, wood panels or canvases which feel restrictive in their predefined surfaces and edges- instead I make my own supports from acrylic paint that is built up in layers onto stretched polythene sheets then peeled away to create a 'skin' or 'sheet' thus starting with nothing but the paint itself. I go on to manoeuvre these skins into three-dimensional forms or use them as a base to make monochrome or geometric paintings.

My working method is systematic but involves a chain of decisions guided by intuition and I often work in clusters or groupings in the studio- juggling many things at once. I like the comparative aspect of this way of working and view finished pieces like members of a family who are strongly related yet have their own unique characteristics.

I often create folds, pleats and stacks out of these skins and attempt to dissolve them by applying thick paint over them, sanding them smooth or with the larger installations by using various light sources. It's all about bringing something into being that didn't exist before and then going on to take it away - relating my practice to natural life cycles - birth, life and death and to the many liquid, transformative states we experience that connect the personal to universal and the physical to the spiritual.





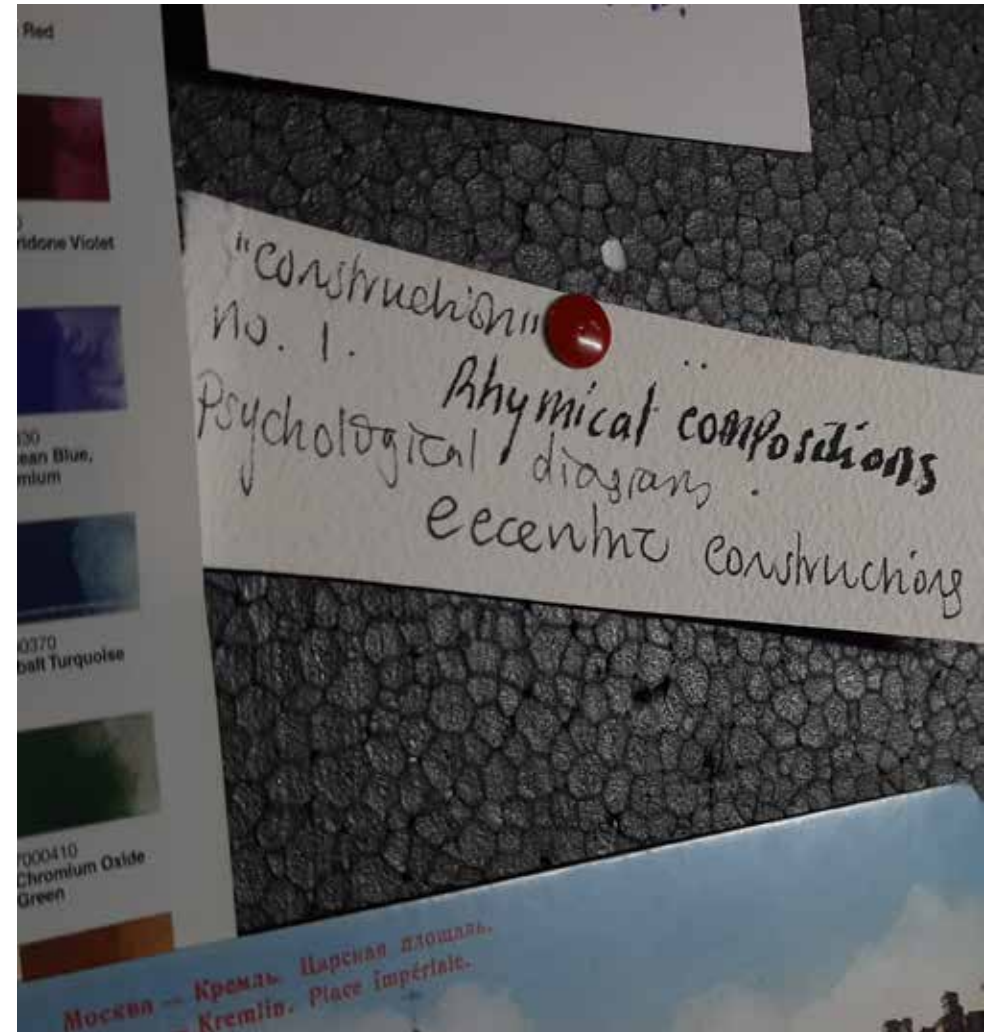
Tight fit
Acrylic paint sheet, 2016, 18 x 30cm



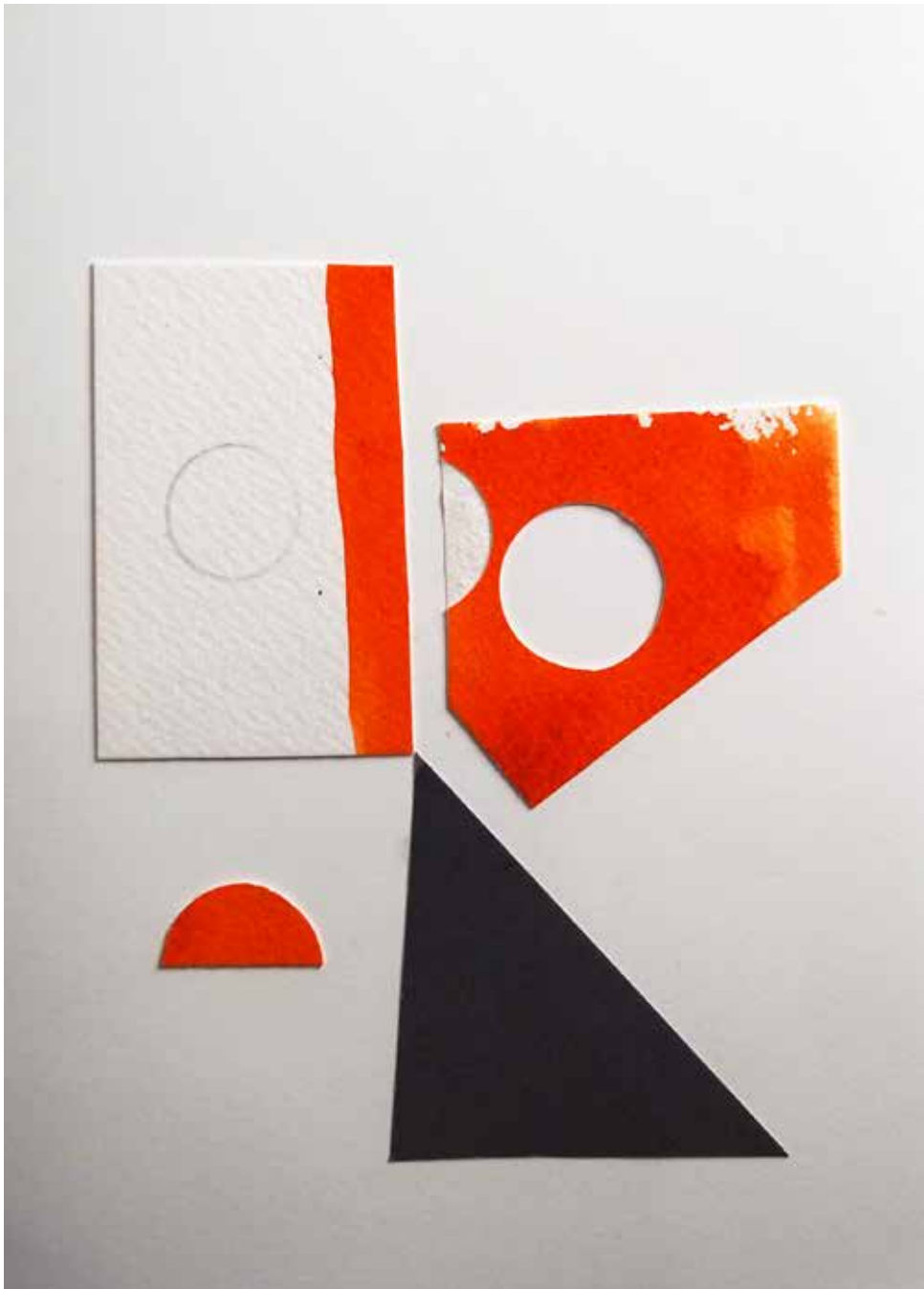
From Nowt to Summat (detail)
Acrylic paint sheet, dimensions variable, 2014

Lucy Cox

I'm currently working on loose paper and in sketchbooks, creating studies using watercolour, ink and collage. Processes often involve ordering, contemplating, and cutting, constructing and reconstructing; thinking through line, shape, space and colour relationships. Geometry and architecture continue to interest me. Influences include Matisse and Picasso, as well as my 2019 visit to Russia where I encountered paintings by Constructivist painters Rodchenko, Stepanova and Popova.



Mood board



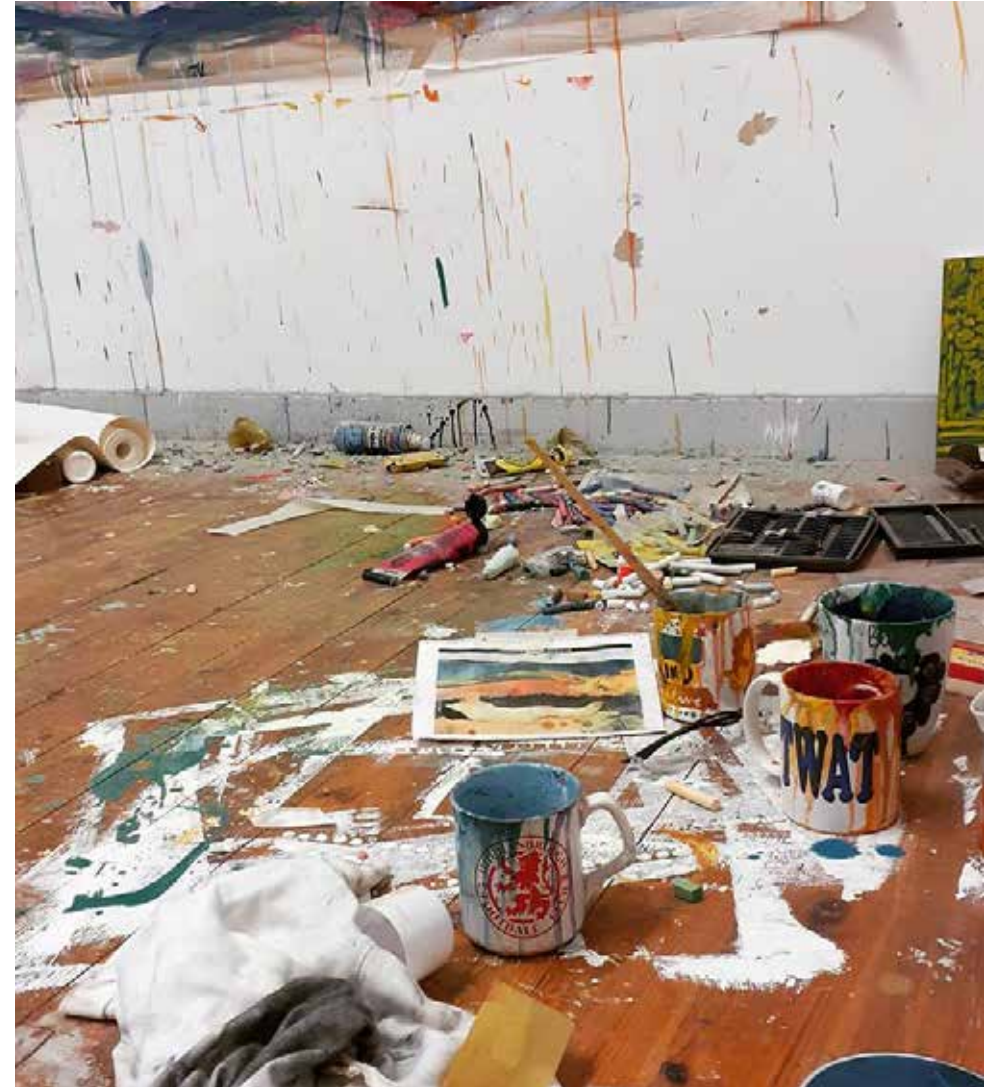
Construction (Orange and Grey)
Watercolour and collage on paper, 14 x 21cm, 2020



Construction (Blood Orange)
Watercolour, ink and collage on paper, 14 x 21cm

Gordon Dalton

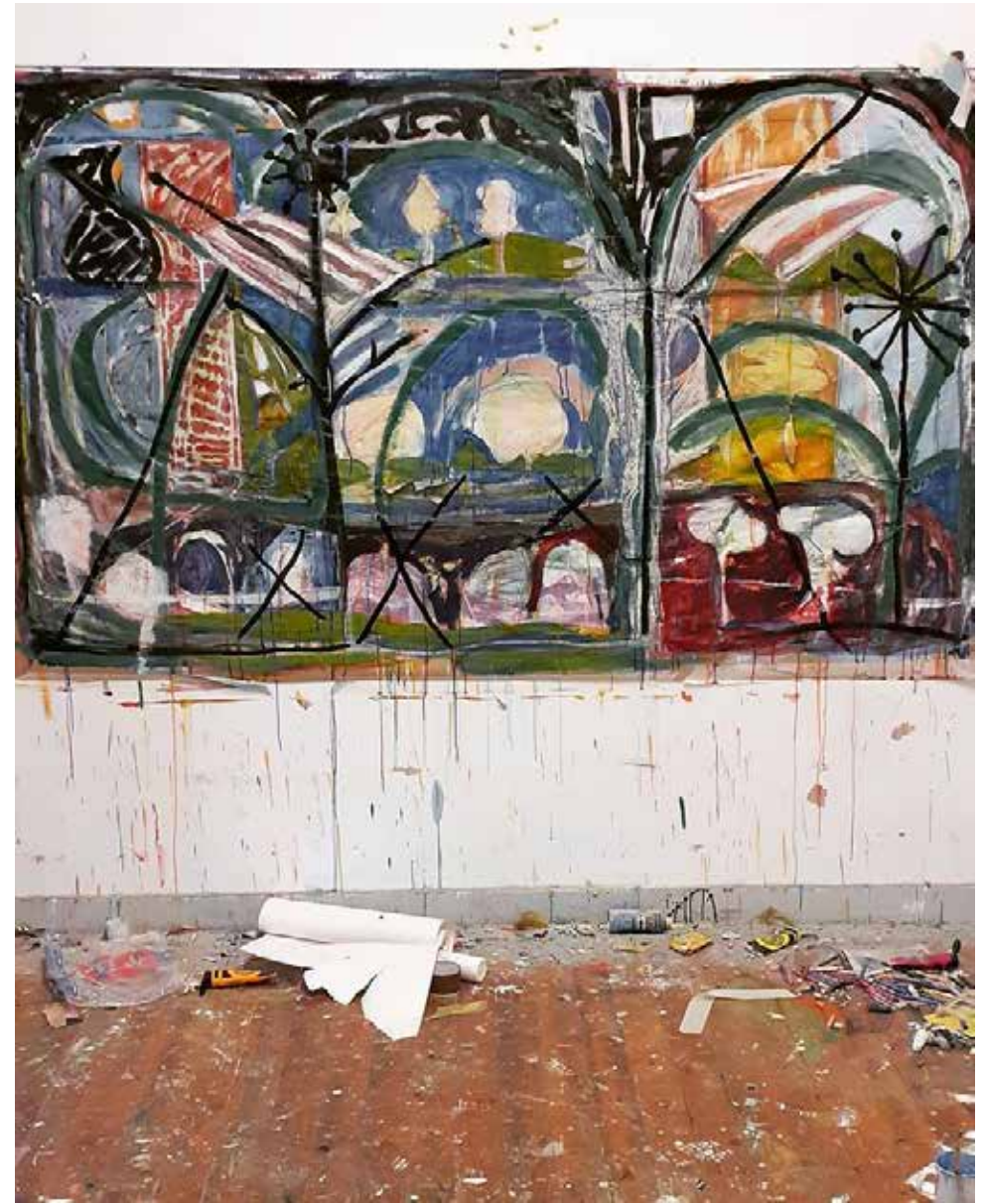
After a year of exhibitions, where I was lucky enough to show work regularly, I wanted to undo a lot of the work I had done. My paintings on canvas can take either 1 day or 1 year, and I often return to work many years later to make changes. These works on paper were a place to make mistakes, test new motifs and compositions, and not be so precious about the final object. I'd played around with different hanging methods for the larger paintings but these were very roughly taped together, adding and taking away sheets of paper. The surface is very textured and very fragile, rips and tears are pasted over, worked again. I am never sure what size they will be, or if they will exist at all. I'm unconcerned whether these are finished or not, they exist in a permanent state of maybe. The idea of them 'existing' in a virtual space appeals to my slightly twisted sense of humour!



Studio view



Blood Beach
Acrylic and pastel on paper, 150 x 200cm, 2020



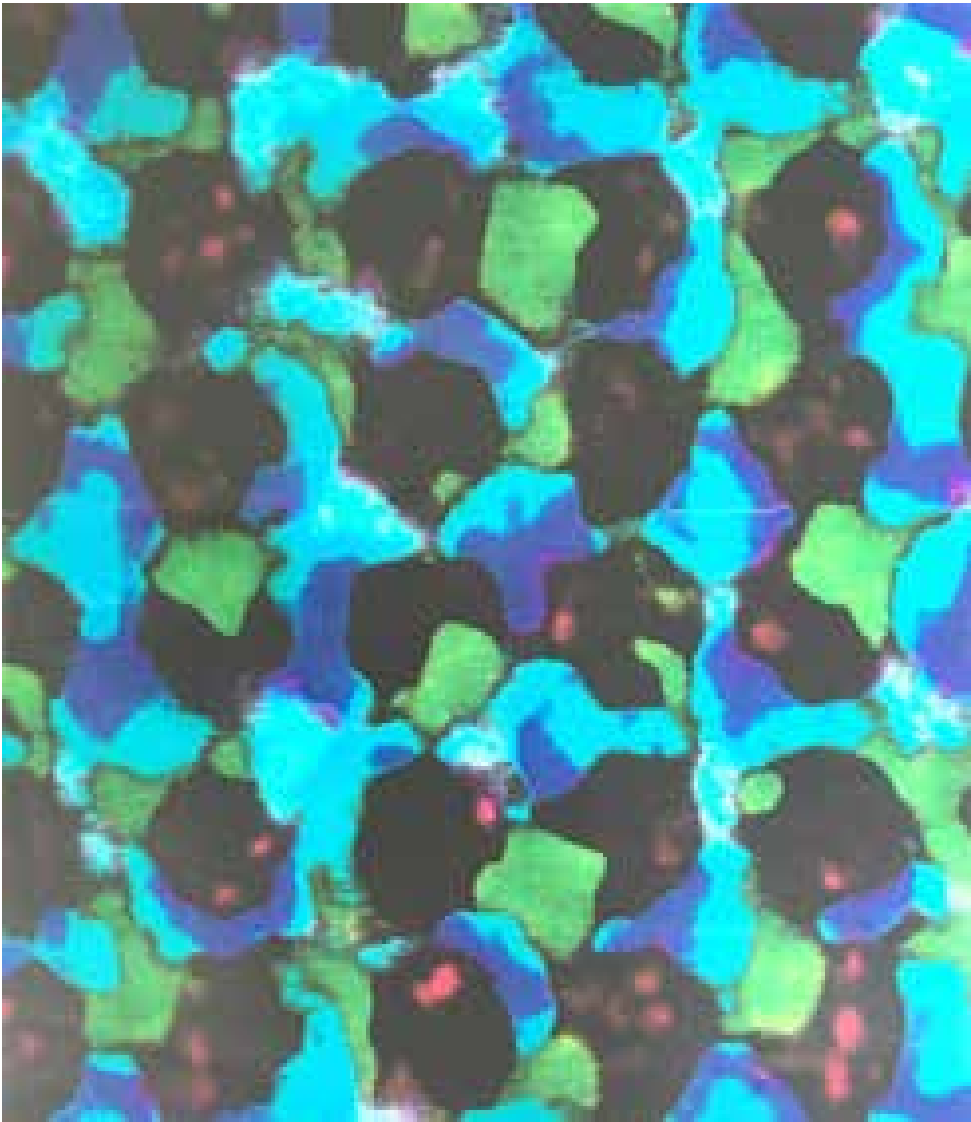
Wildside
Acrylic and pastel on paper, 150 x 240cm, 2019

Pen Dalton

As I haven't been able to get much painting done during lockdown, it seemed a good opportunity - and as I am moving to a smaller studio space - to review my life's work and decide what to do with artworks that haven't sold or been donated to collections. Instagram has been great - some 50 year old drawings, prints and one-off paintings have had an airing after lying unseen in plan chest drawers. Over the years I have destroyed a great deal and will continue to cut them up and perhaps re-use bits. I will be sending more stuff to charity auctions and give to friends. I have a core of artworks left - odd prints that seem to have some life in them that I am reluctant to part with. Ideas that I lost confidence with, couldn't follow through and which now I could resolve/ rework/ reimagine as paintings. The ones I am submitting were initially part of research [text based] into binary opposition and difference [Yes/No?] and don't have much meaning as A4 photocopies, but which a painterly approach might enhance.



Studio view



Photocopy Squash



Full Stop

Natalie Dowse

In 2015 I began working on a series of small paintings called 'The Sum of the Parts'. This project was based on 'selfies' that I used as the source material for the paintings. The idea was that I would produce two (almost) identical 'twin' paintings: one would go back to the subject who provided the photo (as a gift and a thank you) and one would stay in my collection to make a larger painting installation. This project in itself was never fully realised, and therefore, has never been exhibited in its true and intended form. Like so many of the series of paintings I produce I may well return to it sometime in the future. The two paintings submitted 'Untitled (portrait of a girl emerging)' and 'Untitled (portrait of a girl disappearing)' have been hanging on my studio wall for about the last 3 years! They are both based on one of the original 'Sum of the Parts' images. These two paintings, one on canvas and the other on very smooth panel, were made purely for experimental reasons. Both paintings are monochrome, but the first is painted in acrylic and the other in oil. I do not normally use acrylic paint, although I do wish it was something I could master. Here I wanted to try acrylic once again and then use acrylic glazes - which as I suspected dried far too quickly for my liking. With the second oil painting I wanted to build up layers of white glazes over a monochrome portrait to see how far I could push the gradual elimination of the rendered image, before it completely disappears.

My question would be: 'What does an artist do with 'limbo' paintings that they do not wish to destroy, yet equally unsure about whether they should ever be viewed? Should they be exhibited as studies or should they be confined to the studio wall forever?



Studio view



Untitled (portrait of a girl disappearing)
Oil on panel, 20cm x 20cm



Untitled (portrait of a girl emerging)
Acrylic on canvas, 20cm x 20cm

Fiona Eastwood

“There is an engagement with proximity in the work. Proximity in the addressing of space within the paintings, the implied distance placed between the real world and the camera (the initial point of documentation) and the remove of the painting from the photograph, this remove providing the ‘small space of slippage ...where our minds can see to freely-wonder but not obsess” Rodney Harder

“An employment of 1960s filmic approaches towards framing a subject plays on proximity, the ground is both impenetrable and void-like, illusionistic depth is disrupted constantly as the flat surface of the painting is addressed. Paint becomes its own preclusion not confined to revealing a represented image but its own presence on the surface ‘the painted mark is the thing in itself and the thing it describes” Altfest, the pursuit of eschewing a complete adherence to either being important to the work. “To remain unsure about when a representation points to a reality outside of itself and when it points back to itself. It is in this place of uncertainty that a painting finds its greatest leverage.” Barry Schwabsky

The paintings are made in one sitting with oil on board, the fluidity and speed of the marks indicates a quick application, the motif is compressed into a series of gestures. The recent collage/embroidery pieces use shapes from a series of oil paintings made on paper. These shapes are cut out and stitched to a canvas covered in black cloth, this creates the same ground as used in the paintings. The colours and shapes in these pieces are taken from postcards and photographs from my father’s time on Christmas Island in the 1950s. The act of embroidery creates a slowing down of the process and an intimacy in the proximity with the work.



Work in progress oil on board, 25 x 30cm



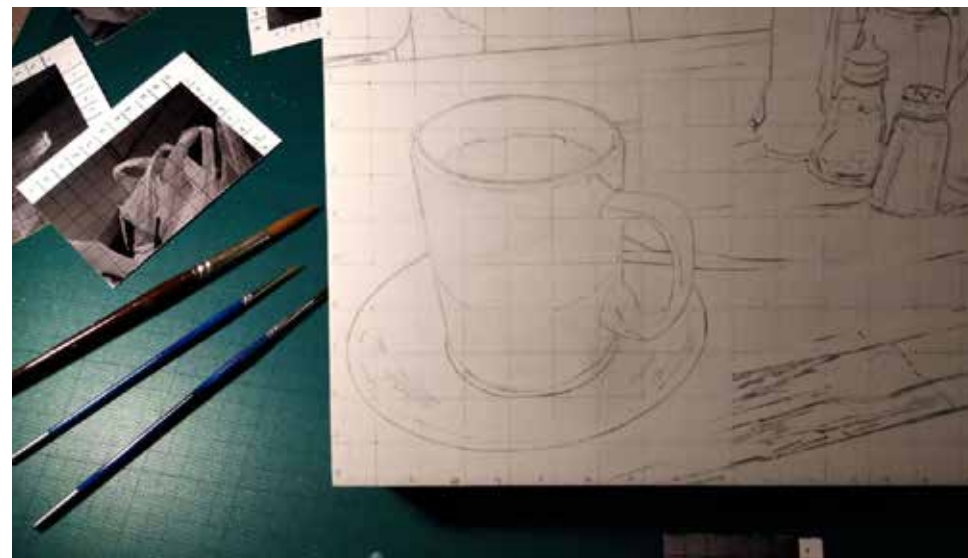
Land
Oil on paper with embroidery on canvas, 23 x 30cm, 2020



Land, in progress
Oil on paper with embroidery on canvas, 23 x 30cm, 2020

Nathan Eastwood

Café: still-life studies that operate at the level of yes or no, they present an unresolved, unfinished issue for me. Yes: because they have great qualities. The light and dark values contrast well. The details are visible and allow for various textures to be painted contrasted, such as the smooth surface of the mug in relation to the grainy table. Conceptually the subject of these studies, sit within my wider project; this being the revealing of everyday life which continues with my fascination of 'Kitchen Sink' aesthetics. No: they do not sit within my previous series of paintings that focus on ordinary people getting on with daily activities. The reasons for no are possibly outweighed by the reasons for yes. The YES & NO question continues to persist with these motifs. An on-looker will possibly see the forest, where I can only view the singular tree. Decisions: whether to take a motif and make a painting or question its relevance is often invoked throughout the painting process, from beginning to end. From the start, whether this is sitting at the computer looking for an image, during the drawing up, or at the first stages (underpainting) of the painting, I am thinking and asking myself, what is the relevance of this motif, conceptually and materially? Even when a painting is completed and seen by the public there can always be a chance that the work could be edited or erased, but not always! Regarding the question when is a painting finished? Well, for me, the painting is never, totally, finished. I do not sit looking at the photographic data and then look at the painting and say yes, copy done; painting completed. No, I look at the painting and decide on its own merits if it's ready. There is just a point where I will say, after scanning the totality of the painted surface – enough! Nonetheless, I could always find a reason, an excuse for finding something with the so-called finished painting and then work further on it, so, it is never truly completed.





Study for Cafe Still Life
Enamel on board, 2020



Study for Cafe Still Life
Enamel on board, 2020

Susie Hamilton

'These are from my C-19 series which began in early April when I was contacted by consultant hepatologist and art collector, Dr Peter Collins. He had bought my paintings before and thought that images of Covid Wards might be interesting subjects for my work. He sent me photographs from his hospital and I then sourced more from the news. I did indeed respond to this subject, finding the isolation of medics in PPE and the defencelessness of patients in clinical, neon-lit settings inspirational. The images also appealed to me because of my preference for painting figures that are in some way hidden: made into silhouettes, obscured by darkness or light or masked by veils, hoods or unusual, specialised coverings. Similar to my series of 'Polar Explorers' and 'Astronauts', my doctors/nurses are metamorphosed through their hoods and visors. Some appear like creatures from Bosch or like 16th plague doctors, while others have an angelic quality with light shining from them or on them. I imagined their alien appearance to be especially dramatic for the patient and so painted pictures from this viewpoint with the nurse/doctor looming over the figure on a bed. I wanted also to contrast doctors/nurses in their high-tech kit with the the struggling patient, reduced to an obscure, messy shape among tubes and drips and monitors.'





Turquoise Ward
Acrylic on paper. 2020



Peach Ward
Acrylic on paper. 2020

Suzanne Holtom

I have been thinking about the reclusive figure of the hermit or anchorite in religious history and have been researching stories, images and illustrations. In the process of making the paintings I am trying to embody ideas of a kind of brutal rawness yet retain a seductive richness and depth. I am reusing canvas from old failed work to begin the first stages. I then try to build the image through addition and negation or denial by sanding layers back; surfaces become worn and weathered. Drawing goes into painting to allow the figure to emerge whilst adding patches of canvas to enrich, repair or complicate an area. I add layers of coloured glazes to try to produce rich glowing surfaces and accentuate the underlying textures on the worn canvas. Now the decision is when to stop this process of removal and addition? I have paused for the moment to take stock.



Studio view



Work in Progress
Oil on canvas, 100 x 130 cm, 2020

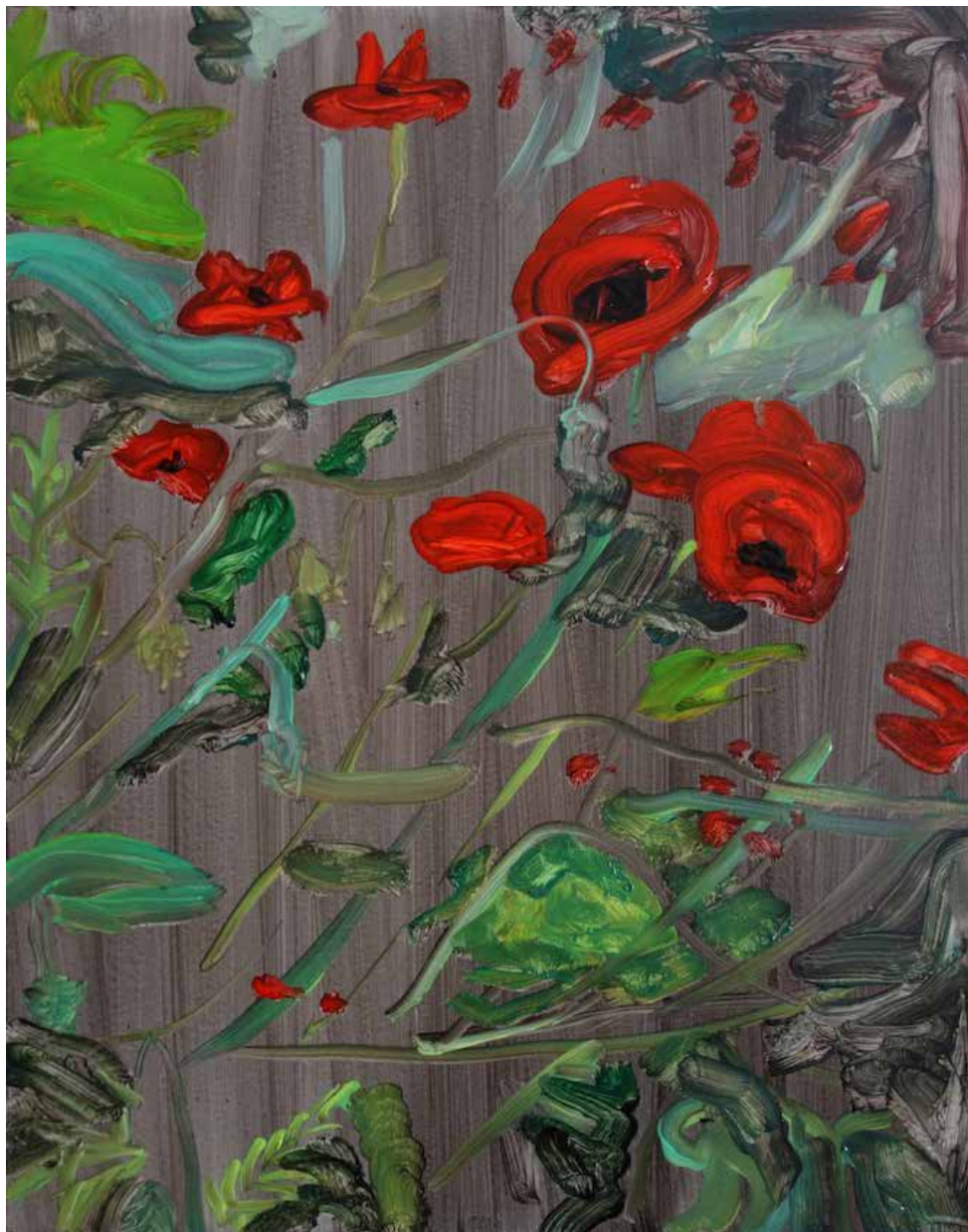


Work in Progress
Oil on canvas, 100 x 130 cm, 2020

Barbara Howey

This is a new series of paintings started since lockdown. They are taken from photographs I take on my daily walks. The photographs document the species of plants seen, not rare but local, some native and some finding a space to grow where seeds have blown them from suburban gardens and wastelands. Many of the locations where I take my photographs are on private property and involve trespass. An ancient bluebell wood and a woodland due to be “developed” into non-essential housing, field edges and roadside verges. Much of the countryside in East Anglia is owned by a small number of wealthy landlords who use and abuse the land as they wish, cutting down woodlands for profit and widescale use of agrochemicals which poison the earth and deplete biodiversity. I use the photographs when I get back to my studio to make paintings which are made rapidly wet into wet in an attempt to capture the aliveness and vitality of the plants and the fleeting moments of the plants precarious lives





Roadside Verge, Vicarage Gardens 2020.
Oil on board, 30 x 40cm, 2020



Bindweed, Suburban Wasteground
Oil on board, 30 x 40cm, 2020

Phil Illingworth

My process:

Seed: an idea or basic concept scribbled into a note book. Gestation: days, weeks, months, sometimes years - mostly in my head. This is the most important part of my process; cogitating, reflecting on options, researching materials, technical considerations. Fruition: making; manufacturing, refining, fine tuning, finishing, sudden appearance. Getting used to the new thing; naming; letting it venture forth on its own. I admit it, my choice of some words is a contrivance to make it seem like a birth. But perhaps there are parallels to be drawn.



Psychophant III

Acrylic, acrylic varnish, PVA, turned beech, birch, MDF (2020) 52 x 31 x 9cm

YES/NO

This is a tough one, but I want to engage with the spirit of it as much as I can. I'm not comfortable showing work in progress. Someone said it saps the energy of a work. I agree. Not in a literal sense, but I can relate to the notion. It's as though sharing before I'm ready dilutes some of the thrill of the creative process. That absolutely has to be a pure and personal thing, I don't want to risk another's input or opinion corrupting my search. I won't put my work forward for crits for the same reason. I want to stay focussed, and if my ideas are shit it's down to me and me alone.

I'm not comfortable showing the inside of my sketchbook either. But then it's not really a sketchbook, it's a notebook, a place where I record the seeds of ideas. Little notes for me and me alone, shorthand scribbles of ideas to stop me forgetting them or to capture the essence of the first thought. There is no yes/no at this stage - everything is recorded. I decide later if it is good or bad. Sometimes I look at one of these notes and I have absolutely no idea what I intended. The byproduct of getting zoned into free thought I suppose.

I tend not to work up ideas in my notebook. Mostly that is done in my head, occasionally on scraps of paper, standalone working drawings to resolve a technical issue maybe - how I'll physically construct something, or how I'll make a moving part. Often I throw those away when they have done their job.

I go to my notebook to choose what I want to work on next. This is the start of the yes/no process for me. Sometimes I go to my notebook for inspiration too - one idea generates another.

How many yes/no decisions are there? Millions. Tiny micro adjustments

of the hand or alterations to synaptic connections, some from experience, some intuitive, many subconscious. A random splash might be welcomed as a happy accident or seen as an annoyance - another yes/no moment which would never have arisen were it not for happenstance. The smallest of these decisions may actually be the most momentous if they can be traced back to have made a pivotal difference.

Routinely, we become aware of the imminence of a yes/no decision as we approach the completion of a work. The arrival of that moment is frequently very sudden for me. There is an inevitability associated with bringing together disparate components into a finished piece. It can be a shock for me (it often is) when I see the piece for the first time, and one I have come to embrace.

This is a big yes/no stage: nothing goes into the outside world unless I'm happy with it. By that I mean "did I achieve what I set out to achieve?"

If the answer to that is yes, then I'm prepared to share it and let it leave the studio. However, here's the dichotomy: I see my practice as experimental, and the purpose is to pose questions primarily to myself and secondarily to others; if I continue to make work in order to carry on experimenting and to pose these questions, yes/no stands unresolved in perpetuity. There IS no final Yes to end it all. That in a way is the point, and I'm perfectly at ease with that.

Phil Illingworth
July 2020

Linda Ingham

The way that 12 ash trees near Blacktoft in the East Riding of Yorkshire are growing in a line (though rarely used in this manner according to Oliver Rackham's definitive text, *The Ash Tree*) and 'edge' meadow/public footpath/arable field/drain, play into the making process. Added to thoughts of individual pieces, is the consideration of how to shape an installation-based series. Working during lockdown, with an intentionally minimal palette, and two sheets of Somerset Satin paper measuring 155 x 102 centimetres (torn randomly into pieces), I am attempting to develop a body of work which might in the future be shown 'free-form', unframed – out of a home studio where my wall space is minimal. I currently have no venue for a planned exhibition.

Line and edge feature in both literal and ambiguous ways in the works. Each piece begins with a very painterly ground, out of which the image emerges through the process of layers and media. I aim to allow each application to be seen as traces, to create an image which appears precise from a distance, but in which jeopardy and modification are in evidence close-up and the tactile surface (in watercolour? Yes.) comes into view. I am slightly bereft and working a bit chaotically, (though I am hoping it's more of a developed instinct these days!) without knowing where (or if) the works will be shown – I know that capturing a 'plan' into a sketchbook will not work in this instance. Whilst some pieces have moved into an area of 'Yes', I am very much still in a place of 'Yes/No' in the resolution of the series. From August I may be taking up a larger studio space – which is what's really needed here – but until then, I'm definitely in a place of 'Maybe...'





ASH (leaf fragment) 1
Watercolour, gouache, silverpoint and conte on paper, 15 x 15cm, 2020



ASH (leaf fragment) 2
Watercolour, gouache, silverpoint and conte on paper, 15 x 15cm, 2020

Paula MacArthur

Lockdown forced me to abandon two large canvases, one very delicate, precise and meticulous the other gestural, gaudy and loud. Two extremes, both wrong (No), I felt like a mediator between them, hoping that the different approaches would inform one another and resolve to meet somewhere in the middle, dynamic yet meditative (Yes). Four months on they are still both locked in the studio.

At home I started afresh but proceeded very cautiously, working in a familiar yet new space, conscious of projecting the personal and shared anxiety about this new global threat into my work. Through settling into a new pattern of working and thinking about this ongoing, shared experience comes a realisation, we are all in this together; with time to think it is no wonder that all the inequality in society is being questioned so passionately.

The crystals seemed to echo the forms of the virus seen across the media and to grow exponentially outwards from the centre, each minuscule brushstroke, decision, correction edging me closer to a final yes. This kind of imagery is not new for me, in painting these isolated forms emerging from the shadows I hope to communicate a sense of wonder and excitement but this is always tempered by an underlying darkness. Without the shadows we cannot see the light, positive and negative must co-exist, we can't have a yes without a no.



Studio view
To live without concern for success or failure, in progress, 160 x 240cm, 2019



All these silent moments
Oil on canvas, 100 x 100cm, 2020



Didn't I give you nearly everything
Oil on canvas, 100 x 100cm, 2020

David Manley

Silence In The Noise - a small group of six very experimental paintings on 'failed' previous paper work (in this case a group of four sheets of Somerset print paper that never made the cut for a show in Portugal in 2004) that are 27 x 27 cm. and have acrylic over household gloss and eggshell. In the 'analogue world' they would likely be mounted on board when completed. In these pieces, all outtakes from a very large body of similarly created works called Wonky Geometry, I want to use the fluid space as the 'silence' and that the 'noise' be derived from simple formal elements that draw on wave forms.





SITN1
Mixed media on paper, 27 x 27cm, 2020



Dark Harvest Breed
Acrylic on board, 30x30cm

Enzo Marra

As an artist you will come up with a multitude of ideas, more than can ever be executed. But recording them can freeze them in time and allow them to wait on future incorporation and development. The images are related to the concept of the artist and are also a form of self portrait. I am hoping that when the time is right I can breathe new life into them and see what they are able to blossom into.



Artist as ape (red 3)
Ink on paper, 24 x 32cm, 2020



Artist as ape 1
Ink on paper, 24 x 32cm, 2020



Artist as ape (red 1)
Ink on paper, 32 x 24cm, 2020

Paul Newman

A Frank Self Portrait

A Self Portrait as Frank was a live performance on Instagram TV on Tues 23rd June at 7.30pm as part of an online residency from home for 'Peep@Stryx' by Stryx gallery in Birmingham. Linking my painting with my performance strand and developing my English Gothic theme, I think I was afraid to do a painting demonstration or expose myself painting live, so this theatre was in a way camouflaging this dilemma.

The resulting red oval portrait is somewhat inadequate and was a struggle, I've never done a self portrait and I remember thinking where do I put the marks? Yet there was something immediate and primal about it. So when I put the question out there during the live Q&A afterwards should I work on it some more or leave it 2 answers came back;

"As a painter I would work on it some more"

"No leave it, it's integral to the live performance and the moment."

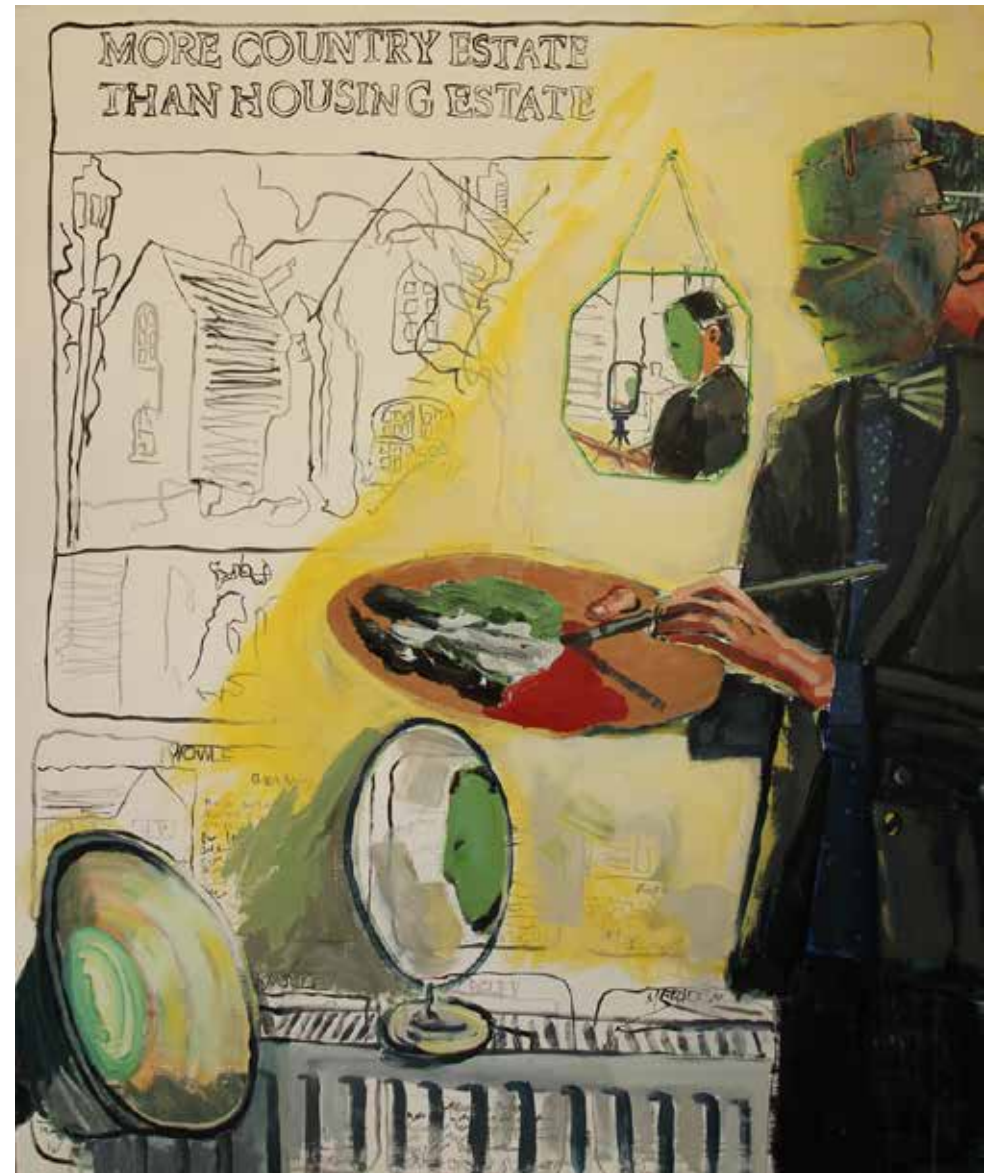
I intend to continue the series, but got distracted when I discovered an old painting/ prop for a bad installation from 2005 which was a very loosely painted property times newspaper on board. Instinctively I painted a film still from the recent performance over it, combining the 2 narratives. Inspired by a quicker more spontaneous approach to painting and my earlier painting style it asks the questions what does this collaged narrative mean and is it finished, a bad idea, or should I work on it some more?



A Frank self portrait studio set up



A Frank self portrait
Acrylic on board, 2020



The Aspirational Frank
Acrylic on board, 122 x 100cm, 2020

Stephen Palmer

These collages were intended as 'models' for a series of paintings that have yet to be made. Created a couple years ago, they've sat around in my studio ever since while I've been working on their things.

The models were constructed by first painting flat colour onto 3 pieces of A4 paper which were then carefully cut-up and reconfigured so the resulting models are structurally similar but with different colour arrangements. Biro scribbles were added to each, and finally the models were folded and tweaked to produce a contoured surface.

I make lots of similar models, most of which get abandoned and discarded and never become subjects for paintings. But these have neither been discarded or selected as subjects. I'm wondering if they could be considered finished works in their own right. Slowly creating a painting over many days, weeks and often months seems such an important part of the work, but is the graft and labour involved in carefully transforming these quickly made models into finished paintings just getting in the way? And can I ever be happy to show something that seems so easily won?



Studio view



Model for painting 2
Painted paper, collage and biro, 29.7 x 21cm, 2018



Model for painting 1
Painted paper, collage and biro, 29.7 x 21cm, 2018

Ruth Philo

My process is usually one of working in layers, quite intuitively, starting with an idea but no real plan! As soon as I begin to put the paint on the canvas, the dialogue with the painting starts and often any idea evaporates as the process of push and pull with the paint takes over. Sometimes paintings can feel too quick and easy and have to be reworked in order to get enough depth - often built up only to have areas removed with white spirit or sanding. There is always a sense of the painting's archaeology having to come to the surface in order for it to feel finished. Someone once said of my work 'it is just the right side of awkward' and in some ways that might be a big part of knowing when a painting is finished, though that decision always takes time. Sometimes simply catching a glimpse of it unexpectedly in the studio will tell you whether it's ready or not. Here are some of my awkward ones that for various reasons I'm still in doubt about!





If blue could be happiness 2
Pigment & binder on unstretched canvas, 85 x 39cm, 2020



Breathing while we talk
Oil on canvas, 70 x 60cm, 2018

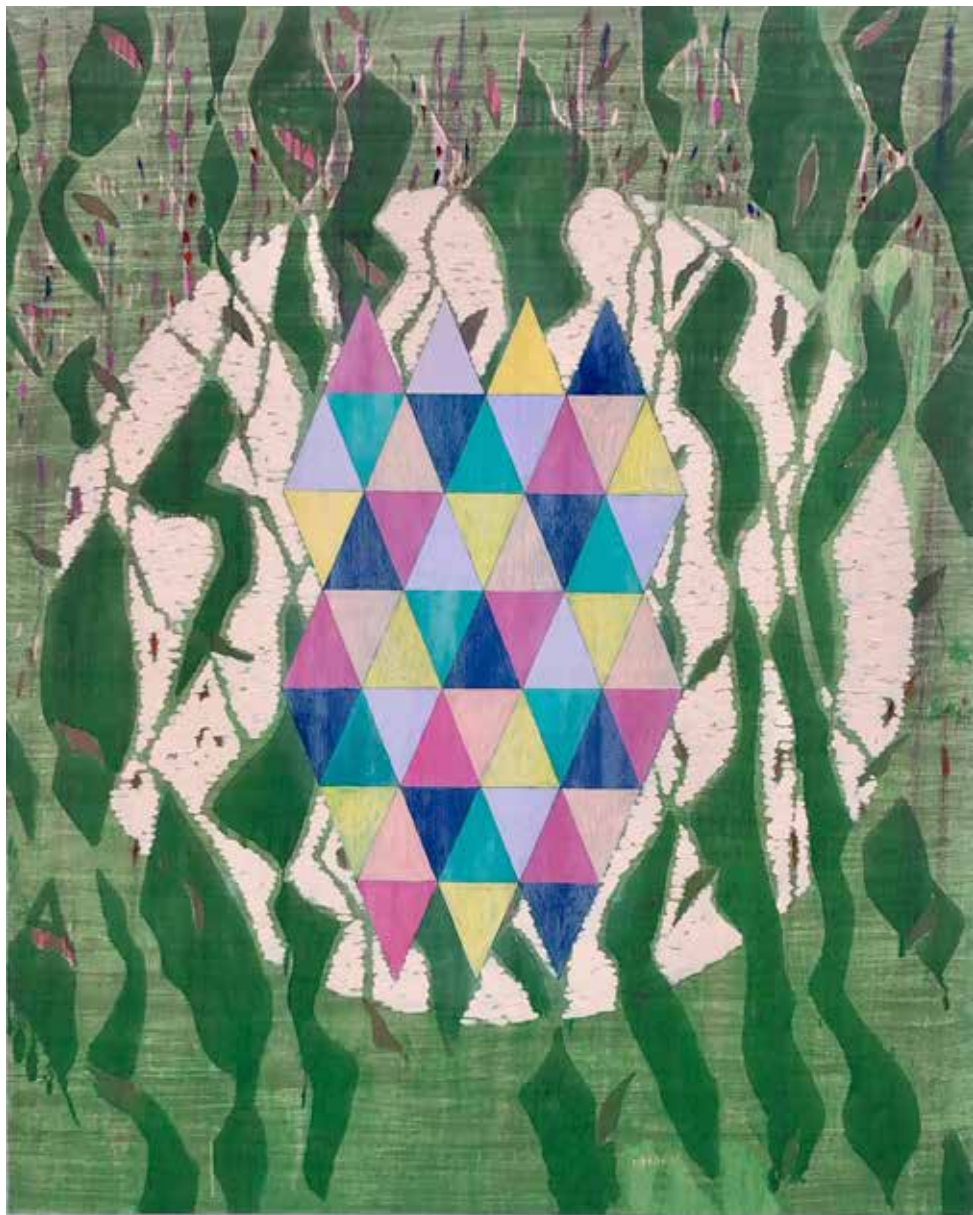
Freya Purdue

My methods of starting a painting or a series of paintings can vary from work to work depending on the nature of the subject. Sometimes I start by using washes, sometimes by drawing straight on the canvas, then washes, with brushes or hands, with thick or thin paint using the colour or colours which generates the atmosphere or feeling that I am looking for in the painting. (all the usual stuff) Sometimes layers are built up over time, sometimes quite minimal intervention is required to achieve what I am looking for. Some paintings become laboured and take a long time and some are fast and simple to achieve.

I have quite a few paintings hanging around in the studio that have gone through some of the initial stages and then seem really unresolvable. If I can't find a way to finish them I just keep them around and hope that something will come to me and inspire their completion. I am never quite willing to give up on a painting although I have some that have been in my store for years! Of course, I am always on the lookout for possible decision making solutions but alas it doesn't always happen. I am always stalking a motif in each work but sometimes it doesn't seem to arrive intact! I think all my paintings in this virtual exhibition are possibly on the edge but without a way forward.



Unswept 3
Oil on canvas, 120 x 150cm, 2020



CHANT 2
Oil on canvas, 150 x 120cm, 2017



PRONAOS
Oil on canvas, 150 x 120cm, 2017

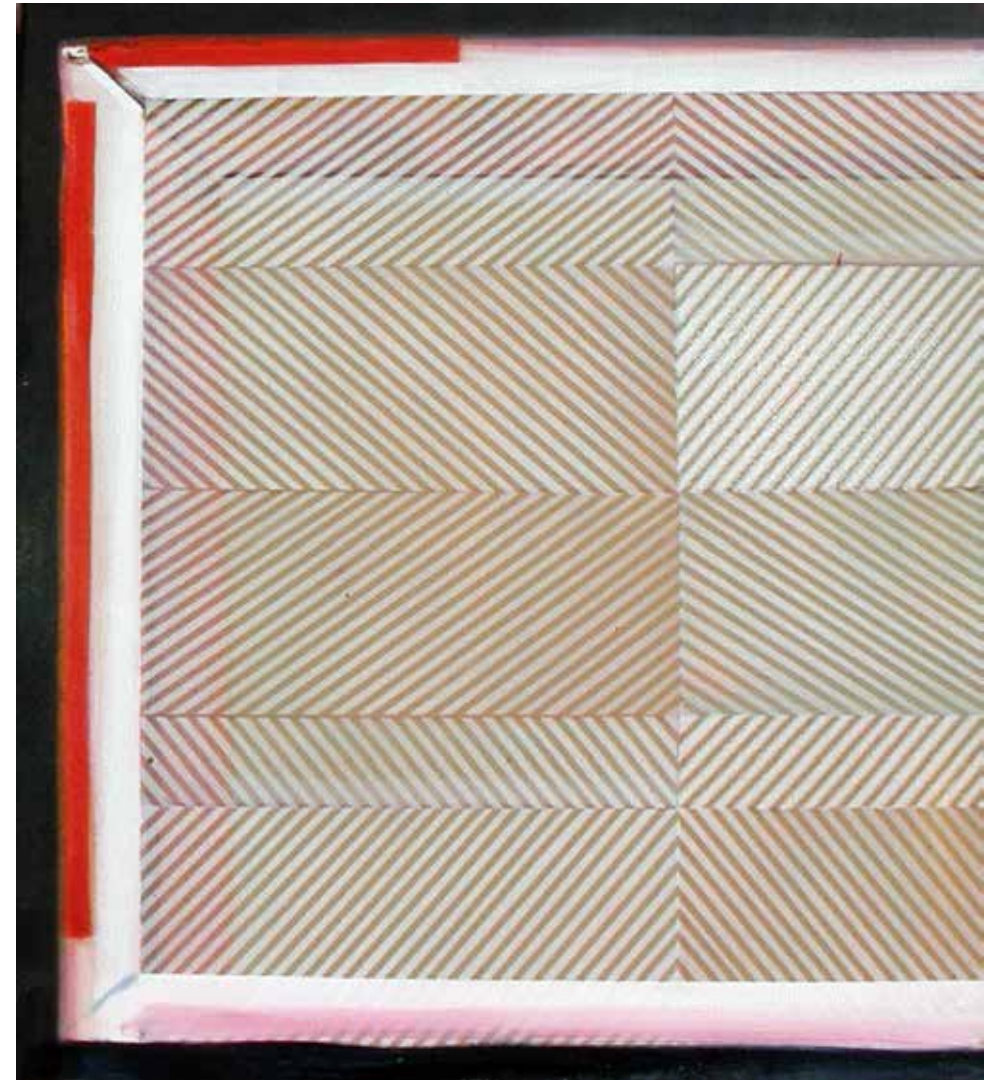
James Quin

These three images based upon paintings by Fra Angelico, Piero della Francesca and Claude Lorrain form a triptych with a river 'running' through it. I am interested in time in painting, and in this instance - Heraclitus's insistence that 'No man ever steps in the same river twice'. The paintings are at the beginning of their journey, each one having benefitted from approximately three days of work. Always with my painting, I reach a stage early on, where I think that they might be finished, and that to carry on would be a risky business, would lose what has already been achieved. These paintings are at that stage now. What rescues me from indecision is the fact that these paintings are worked on amongst many paintings, each one kept 'spinning' like plates. Each 'spinning' painting is finished when all those surrounding paintings have all had their say - have made it known that it's time for the spinning to stop.





Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, in progress
Oil on canvas, 28cm x 25cm



The Story of Art, 1969,
Oil on canvas, 50 x 46 cm, 2020

Katherine Russell

I gather as much source material together, which is inspiring me at the time, be it photos (my own, screen grabs, film stills) sketches & also colours that I'm interested in. I tend to be quite obsessed with certain colours or hues at times. I then work on paper in pen in my sketchbooks & then inks. I enjoy the immediacy of inks. It's almost as if I have to go through this process each time with a new body of work to then free myself to actually approach the canvas or board on the wall. I always start out thinking too much. I find when I'm able to let go & just paint is when things start to become interesting. I want to capture the effortless nature of these original sketches. Asking myself - what parts are interesting, when has something become muddy or just 'too much' to look at, that there's no way in to actually see. A balance of line & marks, not overly descriptive or representational, a question or intrigue, unexpected.





Sketchbook study i
Ink and pen on paper, 29.7 x 21cm, 2020



Landscape Study ii
Oil on canvas, 30.5 x 25.5cm, 2019

Molly Thomson

The work begins with a ready-made: usually the cheap stretcher or panel. It brings its qualities of roughness or exactitude, and makes demands that are to some degree beyond my control. It provides me with something I am obliged to interact with (not least of all the historical baggage of painting!), and I must work with its exposed glitches and possibilities. This is the beginning; there are initial strategies, but no mapping out of a specific outcome.

I don't see the panel as a neutral plane upon which a pictorial event must sit, even though there is usually at the outset one plane upon which paint does sit. I am interested in the entire object - its facade, edges, substructure, interior - and in its occupation of space. The process in the studio is one of making and unmaking, accumulation and waiting. It involves many layers of poured paint as well as cutting, displacing, joining, mending and stacking. The stuff resists and might acquire small scars to its skin. Occasionally the structure breaks down or simply fails to hold itself together.

It is an episodic process over a period of time and the objects slide into conversation (or collision) with one another before dispersing again. Many elements sit around for months before I return to them - returning either because they no longer feel precious (or intractable) or because they now offer possibilities in a new context. Considered though each move may be, sometimes a period of play allows what analytical thought could not.

The “yes” moment is suggested by an object that asserts its identity and, however small, can act within a space. But at times it is a provisional yes.



Studio view



Untitled (prop)
Found wood & acrylic on panel, semi-circle 33 x 60cm max, blue piece 34 x 33cm max, 2020



Unnamed element (triangle displacement - doubled)
Acrylic on panel, max 34 x 33cm, 2020

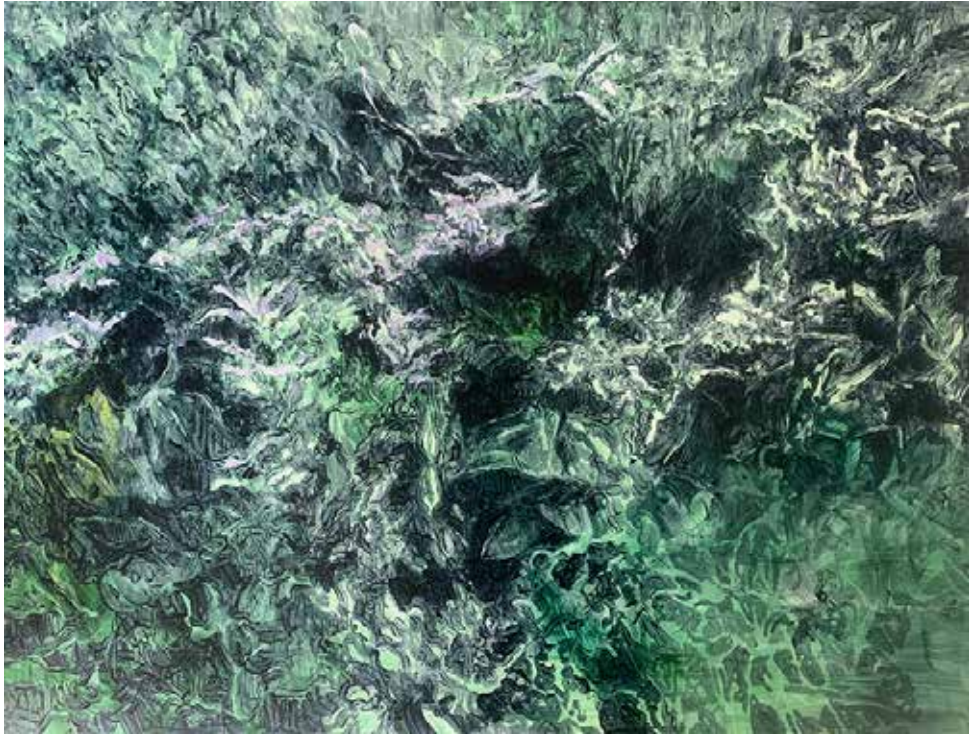
Judith Tucker

This ongoing series of paintings of the pioneering salt marsh plants of the Humberston Fitties, Tetney Marsh area, consider plants that are both vulnerable to sea level rise, but that also help to protect the land from flooding. The work is intended to be seen in relation to the Night Fitties work and together it explores human and more-than-human worlds in microcosm and juxtaposition, touching on the play of light, tide and colour, uncanny transformations after

dark, and notions of vulnerability, occupation, resilience and reclamation. I work in layers and these two paintings are in relatively early stages, I have had them hanging in my studio for about three months without touching them as I really feel they have an energy, fluidity and potential that I do not want to lose, inevitably they will go through a low point before I resolve them, it's how to make the next move that's an issue



Studio view



Dark Marsh Sea Lavender, in progress
Oil on linen, 60 x 80cm, 2020



Dark marsh winter samphire, in progress
Oil on linen, 60 x 80cm, 2020

Joanna Whittle

My paintings take many weeks to make and ultimately become a long journey before they reach their final stage. The 'finishing' of each piece reflects the nature of this journeying- sometimes one simply reaches an end point, when the process just comes to a stop and other times there is a feeling of arrival where there is a moment of revelation and understanding. When I make a painting, I think about it for some time, usually away from the studio. The desire to make a work becomes about deciding whether to take that journey and whether there is anything at the end. I then usually make one very brief sketch, really only for the purpose of initiating a compositional starting point. The ensuing painting encapsulates so many iterations which happen within the painting and not before the painting. They are unfolding worlds, with the imaginative becoming a hallucination in the 'real' landscape. To underpin this the paintings all have luminous and rich grounds which form the basis of these worlds- which glow through in the final iteration. I think the process of painting always brings up these questions of control- about how much the painter directs the work and how much it defines itself through a series of minute, intuitive decisions brought about by the collaboration between the consciousness (or subconsciousness) and the material. I feel these processes within painting almost become alchemical or shamanistic - the residue of a ritual





Drawing Charlie's Brown's Sketch for Memorial Postcard
Oil on paper, 38 x 26cm, 2019



Dark Place
Oil on canvas, 18 x 24cm, 2020

Sean Williams

I always work from photographs I have taken. I put them up in my studio for a while so that I am as sure as I can be that they might translate into interesting, successful paintings. If one still resonates after this test of its potential it is more likely to have the necessary layers of intrigue. 'Firebrand' began as a watercolour in 2012 but I could not get it as dark as I wanted so I worked over it quite loosely in acrylics four years later. It still did not feel dark enough so I worked over it again in a more Pointillist style during lockdown so that I could introduce more colours to create a more interesting surface and visual experience. The factory floor is cold grey, whereas the walls and the girders near the light source are a warm umber - an awkward clash of palettes to resolve, petrifying me into inactivity once again. I need advice on how to proceed, otherwise it will remain dormant for another four years.

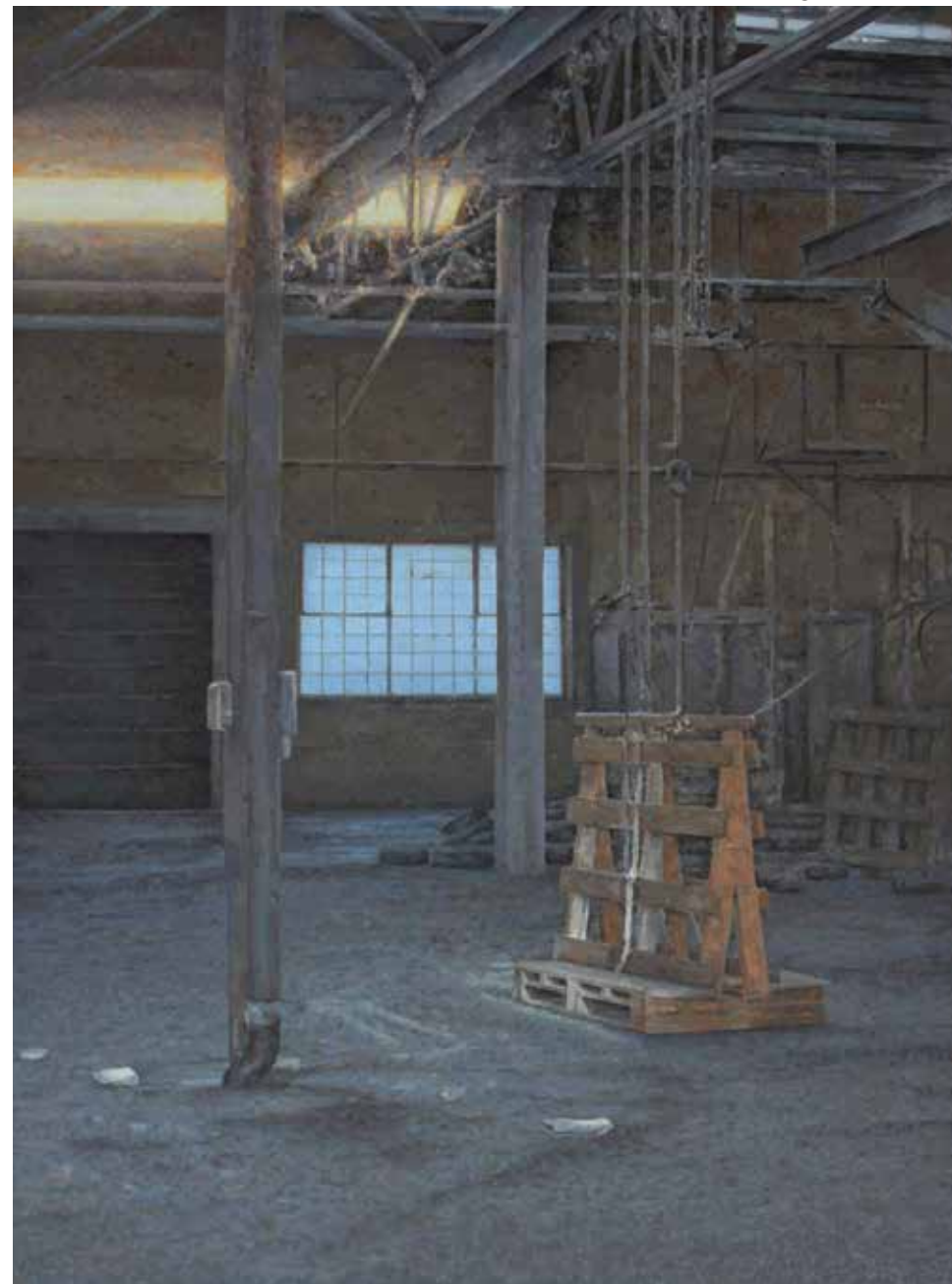
'Crimes and Riches' began as a study for a larger painting. It is quite a complex image and I needed to make a study in order to see how it might work and how I might refine it. It is made of thin layers of burnt umber acrylic but has reached a point where I like it, and would like to complete it with perhaps just a few touches of white and some umber to increase the tonal range. It could thus be part of my attempt to be less bound to the original photograph and to work with what the painting itself suggests as it progresses.

'Still Point II' ought to be called 'Still Point I' as it was the first of two paintings but failed on account of the leaning tree on the left which ruins the composition, but remains nicely painted. 'Still Point I' is a much better effort and is now known as 'Still Point'. Should I rework this, removing the tree and using it as a platform to be more adventurous with the addition of dots of colour? (I think I know the answer).





Still Point II
Acrylic on paper, 30 x 22cm, 2020



Firebrand
Acrylic on paper, 38 x 27cm, 2015-20

David Ainley
Iain Andrews
Amanda Ansell
Karl Bielik
Day Bowman
Julian Brown
Simon Carter
Deb Covell
Lucy Cox
Gordon Dalton
Pen Dalton
Natalie Dowse
Fiona Eastwood
Nathan Eastwood
Susie Hamilton
Suzanne Holtom
Barbara Howey
Phil Illingworth
Linda Ingham
Paula MacArthur
David Manley
Enzo Marra
Paul Newman
Stephen Palmer
Ruth Philo
Freya Purdue
James Quin
Katherine Russell
Molly Thomson
Judith Tucker
Joanna Whittle
Sean Williams