

Working Against the System

Discover a wide range of abstract artists at Transition Gallery

Working Against the System is a fascinating new exhibition of abstract and semi-abstract painting at Transition Gallery.

Featured artists include Jo Bruton, Debbie Bell, Noel Forster, Yvonne Hindle, Jenny Jennings, Paul Peden, Katie Pratt, and DJ Simpson.

Many of these artists throw the viewer off course by introducing the problematic and employing chance or error. Curator Helen Baker, who is the Director of Gallery North at Northumbria University, explains the genesis of the project.

"The exhibition came out of conversations I had with fellow artists Katie Pratt and Jenny Jennings. We were interested in the way that abstract artists were attracted towards modernist or minimalist ideas but at the same time wanted to subvert them in one way or another. This subversion of the status quo has a relevance to both art and social politics."

Baker's choice of artists was based on diverse criteria: "Katie Pratt's work is developed out of systems that are based in subjective response to the accidents of paint so that there is a kind of disinterested aesthetic that emerges. This interested me enormously as a way of renegotiating the act of making.

"Noel Forster was an important figure for many younger artists as his practice straddled the conceptualist attitudes that informed a way of working with abstraction in painting that could carry content rather than be held within the frame of formalist or minimalist modernism. The artists following Forster have picked up on an attitude to making that challenges aesthetics in painting.

"It is evident that DJ Simpson, for instance, is operating within the genre of minimalism using industrial materials while at the same time offering an image that stems within the traditions of painting and drawing.



Jo Bruton, 'Spotlight Series', 2011, courtesy the artist and Matt's Gallery, London

"Yvonne Hindle is working the other way round her imagery is reminiscent of the sublime chaos of the romantic John Martin and she references star systems in her titles but the works are very object based in a modernist sense.

"An artist like Jo Bruton will use transparent gesso to ensure the canvas is part of the image or mix paint and apply it to give the semblance of a piece of cut card.

"Paul Peden will scale up the flaw in a drawing within a seven foot painting in order to embrace an awkwardness, he talks enthusiastically about the craft of making.

"Jenny Jennings has kitchen implements in her studio that act as

painting tools and this post-feminist stance is very evident in the work of Debbie Bell. Bell's interest in the writings of Merleau-Ponty has led her towards a theorised engagement with the use of the smudge, dissolve, dribble and mix of colour as material.

"This move towards colour as material is an emerging concern in both figurative and abstract painting and deserves further study."

Working Against the System
25 June - 17 July, Fri-Sun 12-6pm
Transition Gallery
Unit 25a (second floor)
Regent Studios, 8 Andrews Road
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