

An abstract painting featuring a dense network of thin, dark purple lines that crisscross and loop across the canvas. The background is a soft, textured wash of light green and pale pink, with some darker, muted purple areas. The overall effect is one of organic, almost cellular growth or a complex web of connections.

Figuring it out

an exhibition of work by **Peter Neighbour** at
basis Projektraum | Frankfurt am Main | September 2016

A figurative painting isn't about a story;
it's about the emotions it can evoke in us.

Figuring it out
September 2016 basis Projektraum, Elbestrassse 10, Frankfurt am Main

Three years ago Neighbour returned to the human figure as the central theme of his practice. It was a conscious move away from earlier realist portraiture with the aim of developing a figurative language he might call his own. "Figuring it out" offers an update.

Figurative art has traditionally told stories about human beings, adopting a narrative form. But Neighbour wants to avoid imposing a "one-size-fits-all" story on every viewer. His work means to be suggestive of narrative while sufficiently ambiguous for each viewer to come up with her own interpretation about "what is going on".

Ambiguity is achieved by the use of painterly marks and gestures read by the viewer as abstracted figurative elements - an out-stretched arm, a torso, or a facial expression. Their ambiguity and awkwardness triggers a response in the viewer that is visceral and immediate- and so all the more powerful - rather than a more considered intellectual and thoughtful response. This "unthinking" response, the artist hopes, stimulates the viewer's own imagination and encourages her to interpret and empathize with the work on a personal level obviating any need for the "explanations" of others.

Two paintings here are from the series "The Wisdom of Silenus". The remainder of the work highlights Neighbour's fascination with the silhouette as a pictorial device.

The satyr Silenus is asked by King Midas what he considers to be the greatest gift a man can receive. "Never to have been born" is the answer. Dissatisfied, Midas follows up by asking what the next best gift might be. "Never to have been born at all" is Silenus' reply.

The two mixed media works on show were created by mixing white pigment, binder, household glue and water and are an homage to Alberto Burri.

artist's statement

I work mainly in oil on canvas, but also on paper using ink, pastel or oil pastel. The composition of a work is typically developed on the canvas but I will use the sketch book to develop ideas and resolve issues with the composition. Photographs are used as a source of ideas for the composition.

I apply the paint to the canvas in very thin layers, like water colour, sometimes waiting a week for the layer to dry completely, sometimes just painting wet layer on wet layer. It depends on what effect I am looking to achieve in the work.

Colours are applied in layers on to the canvas and blend "optically" as one layer of colour is seen through the colour placed on top of it. A blue layer of paint over a yellow layer of paint will create a green layer. This effect also lends depth to the work.

I make up my own turpentine-based painting medium for this technique using dammar varnish, stand oil and cobalt drying agent. Where the glazing effect is not wanted I use a different painting technique or medium or a less transparent oil colour.



Entrance, basis Projektraum, Frankfurt am Main, September 2016



Two figures on a grey background #1
70 x 50 cm, oil on canvas, 2016

Two figures on a green background #1
165 x 120 cm, oil on canvas, 2016



The Wisdom of Silenus #3 120 x 90 cm, oil on canvas, 2016



The Wisdom of Silenus #1 120 x 90 cm, oil on canvas, 2016



Abstract of skin #2
20 x 20 cm, mixed media on canvas, 2016



Two figures on a green background #1 165 x 120 cm, oil on canvas, 2016



Study for an abstracted figure #1
24 x 16 cm, mixed media on canvas, 2016

Two figures on a green background #2
165 x 120 cm, oil on canvas, 2016



Two figures on a yellow background 30 x 30 cm, oil on canvas, 2016



Two figures on a grey background #1 (Series of three)
70 x 50 cm, oil on canvas, 2016

All artwork by Peter Neighbour © 2016
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