

MARC JANCOU CONTEMPORARY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ross Chisholm
June 18-July 31, 2009
Opening Reception
Thursday, June 18th, 6-8 pm



Ross Chisholm, *Irradiation*, 2009, oil on canvas

Marc Jancou Contemporary is pleased to announce the opening of *Fin* by Ross Chisholm. This is the artist's first solo show in New York.

Ross Chisholm deconstructs traditional notions of portraiture by meticulously painting figures from found photographs and art reproductions, and then interrupting them with visual breaks in the form of geometric abstractions, loose brushwork, and thick dabs of paint. Using found, 35 mm slides of English families on holiday, and historical paintings from the 18th and 19th centuries as source material, Chisholm distorts and isolates the figures until a fixed sense of time and place is rendered ambiguous. The strange worlds that emerge fracture the representational nature of painting, further questioning the way in which memory and nostalgia are represented.

Ross Chisholm (b. 1977) is based in London and studied at Goldsmiths College and Brighton University in the UK. Solo exhibitions include IBID PROJECTS, London and Grieder Contemporary, Zurich, on occasion of which a catalogue was published. Group exhibitions include The Hudson Valley Center for Contemporary Art; Galerie Akinci, Amsterdam; Engholm Engelhorn Galerie, Vienna; Marc Jancou Contemporary, New York; Galerie Rudiger Schottle, Munich; and Bloomberg Space, London.

For more information please contact Kelly Woods at Kelly@marcjancou.com.

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Q&A with Ross Chisholm

How do the new abstract paintings function in relationship to the figurative work?

There are different levels of abstraction at play in all the works, to one degree or another. Some are more overt than others. The body of work is a rhythmic whole, composed of pauses, collisions and histories. The more overtly abstract paintings are an essential part of the syncopation, the musicality of the work. At the same time, they strengthen the abstract tendencies and references to surface of the figurative pieces.

Some of your source imagery comes from found slides of family vacations. Where were these slides found?

Most of them are from car boot sales, in or just outside London – you don't have to go far to get to the suburbs. Slide photography belongs to a particular period, a particular holiday-making culture, a particular generation. Holidays in Switzerland, caravan outings, and day trips to the seaside – nostalgia is unavoidable, but at the same time the presence of the images in the second-hand economy suggests a rupture, a death, a loss of memory and connection. This sense of rupture or disconnect is heightened sometimes when you find home-made porn or graphic images such as those of burns victims among the holiday photos, presumably taken by the same photographer, perhaps even on the same roll of film. Motivations and connections can become totally opaque.

What role does memory and nostalgia play in your work?

The colour schemes, the clothes, cars and wallpaper in the found slides offer an almost automatically nostalgic atmosphere. But at the same time, because the slides are bought second-hand, there is an estrangement around the concept of memory. The passages of abstraction and games with the painted surface heighten this sense of estrangement. Historical portraits offer a different kind of collective memory, and possibly a collective amnesia. Ultimately they constitute a refusal of nostalgia and sentimentality.

How does the act of painting from photographs (whether from historical paintings or from 35 mm slides) affect the work?

It makes them into action paintings. It makes them into a very slow Jackson Pollock. The physical process of transcription makes room for the simultaneous co-existence of paintings from different sources and in different styles.

What draws you to the historical portraits that you choose to reproduce?

There are formal elements, especially Gainsborough's palette and brushwork that I find seductive on one level. On another level, there's an idea of self-presentation underlying both the slides and the historical portraits. Many of these portraits construct a fictive narrative in the 'grand style' of Reynolds, with the sitter costumed and posed as an allegorical or classical figure. Sitters could also choose to be portrayed in 'van Dyck dress', antiquated costumes that hinted playfully at contemporaneity with portraits of their parents or grandparents. Art-historical and stylistic references have an extraordinary power to collapse time.

Many of your works are small in scale; does the history of "cabinet painting" play a role in your work?

Work on a small scale can bring with it issues of intimacy and accumulation. The salon and the cabinet of curiosity both suggest models for the production of meaning through aggregation, which are relevant to this body of work.

Your abstractions bring to mind Russian Constructivism, and other examples of early modernism; to what extent do they interest you?

This is another instance of folding art history in on itself. The constructivist references provide a foil – perhaps formal, perhaps ideological – to the figurative images in the group.

How does the notion of time and place function in the work?

I think the painting allows for differing layers of time to compete in the work. On one hand the different source materials come from instances of time and style, which can be charted in terms of decades, even centuries. Then there are the durations evident through the process of making the work: the extremely gestural alongside passages of detail. For me, they all add up to temporal displacements and disruptions. All that is left is potential and shifting points of orientation.