

# The annexe

Peter Davies  
*From the land of...*

2 June – 1 July 2023

For over 25 years I have been making abstract paintings. Going in different directions, by trial and error. Everything I made before was necessary to paint what I make now. Every change of gear, direction, pause or restart within a painting reflects the complexity of navigating and negotiating the world.

My work is motivated by a curiosity as to what the world is, and a desire to learn what painting is, and who I am. My education, at Goldsmiths in the mid 1990s, embraced painting as a method for commodification, but emotion was discouraged. Around 2015 when I made my show *RITES* I realised emotion was the thing I most wanted in my work. I then found a way to do this through making small painted paper collages.

Agnes Martin in 1973 said “I would rather think of humility than anything else”.\*

In response to significant world events of recent years, as a white male exponentially a symbol of patriarchy with therefore a responsibility for structures that perpetuate inequality I wanted to make work that had humility, was modest in scale, with greater care and touch, and dealt with feeling with more tenderness. The paintings in this show reference the large paintings of small squares I made early in my career. Paintings of small squares were not the vehicle I expected to be the one most appropriate to achieve my aims. Those early paintings were an idea, these new paintings are a feeling. I have seldom made small paintings before, and in trying to work out how to do so, I was informed by the modesty of Richard Tuttle, the sensuality of Ellen Gallagher the compassion of Etel Adnan and surprised by artists I warmed to Susan Rothenberg, Walter Sickert, Frank Auerbach, Édouard Manet and others. I’m forever thinking about Hilma af Klint, Ellsworth Kelly, Anni Albers and Blinky Palermo.

Impressionism for me, is a more successful carrier of emotion than expressionism. This changed the pace with which I make paintings. Whilst these are still gestural, abstract paintings they are slowed down and more elusive.

Leaving Goldsmiths in the mid 1990s, where the idea of painting related to an anxiety with the notion of “painting is dead”. This created and necessitated strategies of post neo-conceptualism which I engaged with but I now know are inappropriate for and insufficient to articulate the nuances of painting, and also in my mind misunderstand the achievements of conceptualism. There was an awkwardness with subjectivity and an embarrassment at expression. This was rescued by the normalisation of the validity and endurance of painting in the late 1990s and beyond, which killed the painting is dead proposition, and subsequently, and with the benefit of conceptualism, allowed the necessity of all the complexities of painting in the face of history to be made manifest. This reinvigorated painting in so much as you need to look, think and feel carefully to locate meaning, with every chance of not getting it right. There is a possibility that meaning could be wrapped up in a form or materiality without a return to a pre conceptual mindset.

Teaching at a London art school has excited me and taught me more about painting through listening to young artists. Likewise London’s emerging gallery scene has informed and inspired me. Young artists are reimagining the world and creating new ones.

The title of this exhibition is suggestive of other worlds and fairy tales. It is partially borrowed and misremembered from “In the land called precious stone” a rare 1953 book with 12 images of works by Paul Klee from the collection of Mr Richard Doetsch-Benziger. I was moved and touched by the physicality of this small publication. Arguably abstraction, if it is genuinely so, is a space reliant purely on the imagination. However these new abstract paintings have for me a definite narrative content and I want them to imply worlds existing elsewhere.

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**Peter Davies** (b. 1970, Edinburgh, UK) lives and works in London. Selected exhibitions include *AFTERSHOCK*, The Approach, London, UK (2019); *Chamber Of Maiden Thought*, curated by Graham Domke, Plant, Glasgow, UK (2018); *All Day Breakfast*, curated by Alastair MacKinven and Matt Copson, Reading International at Munchees, Reading, UK; *Form & Volume*, curated by Francesca Gavin, CFHILL, Stockholm, Sweden (2017); *RITES*, The Approach, London, UK (2015); *The Decorator and The Thief (...)*, Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland, UK (2015); *FUNCTION/RITUAL*, Vladimir Restoin Roitfeld, New York, USA (2014); *INVOCATION*, The Approach, London, UK (2012); *The Indiscipline of Painting International Abstraction from the 1960s to Now*, Tate St. Ives, UK; then travelled to Mead Gallery, University of Warwick, UK (2011- 12); *The Epoch of Perpetual Happiness*, The Approach, London, UK (2010); *The Making Of Art*, Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt, Germany (2009); *Previous John Moores Prize Winners*, The Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK (2008).

Coinciding with Peter Davies *From the land of...*, The Approach will also be presenting Tom Allen *The Hour* in the main gallery

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