

Anoushka Akel
Kim Pieters
Hop Scotch
July 13-August 18 2012
Caterina Riva

I find painting, especially abstract painting, a difficult entity to get my head around. There seem to be no guidelines, no leading narratives, no figurative or interpretative anchors offered to the viewer. Not only does one need to pay attention to find in the works a hint that might reveal details from the process of their making but also sensitivity is required to look for the sensations the paintings bestow.

In 2011, a few months apart from one another, I visited for the first time Kim Pieters in Dunedin and had a studio visit with Anoushka Akel in Auckland. Some time after those encounters, the two separate conversations on art, life and painting started to combine in my head and I decided it was time to approach both artists with the invitation to make a show at Artspace.

It would be a mistake to simply compare the two different painterly trajectories that Pieters and Akel represent, there are many things that need consideration: two very different biographies, different compositional choices and desired effects as well as different approaches and ideas around painting.

Kim Pieters has been an abstract painter for over twenty years. Self-taught, she has been creating over time a color palette and a vocabulary of gestures, marks and lines drawn on paper or painted on the demolition boards that have become her support material of choice. The boards dictate the size of the painting as well as allow the implementation in the composition of the scars and holes they bear, residues of their previous incarnation as domestic fittings.

The vitality found in Pieters' paintings is partially generated by an improvisational approach to the works, which are executed responding practically and intellectually to a feeling but not through a preconceived idea, rather finding the right rhythm and the truest form for each composition.

Pieters' paintings strive for an aesthetic autonomy and communicate through either bold or meditative configurations of shapes, colors, lines and smudges.

Philosophical thinking, theory and reading in general, play a very important part in the making of her artworks and the poetic titles Pieters conjures for them, offer a glimpse into the artist's world of the mind.

Anoushka Akel's *Three Handed Painting* series follows a rigorous methodology and applies to each canvas an analytical process of deconstruction.

Composition is equally dictated by a rhythm (fast, slow/hard, easy) and by an order in which painterly gestures are executed. The affirmation of her artistic process requires constant decision making, and a resolute balancing of the elements that make the composition; for instance, alternating the application and removal of information on the canvas' surface through ways of sanding or brushing.

It has been extremely exciting to follow over the course of several months the gestation of the new body of work Akel has been developing for Artspace. During this time, she has kept pushing the boundaries of her paintings and the confines of the system she constructed, beyond the grid, beyond the frame. What you see in the gallery is a fierce selection from a larger series of paintings.

There are multiple departure points as well as several potential multiple endings to Hop Scotch. One thing that will stay with me is the realisation that abstraction is not a substitute or an escape from reality, rather it is a supplement to it.

Working with both artists has proved an extremely interesting curatorial experience, I am glad they took me into their studios and let me into their processes, readings and inspirations. I am definitely less scared of painting now.

Main Gallery

Anoushka Akel

Three Handed Painting, 2012

1. oil on canvas, 350x400 mm
2. chalk pastel on canvas, 400x450
3. oil and pastel on canvas, 300x350
4. gesso, oil and pastel on canvas, 400x450
5. oil and pastel on canvas, 400x450

Kim Pieters

6. *Gate Pa.29 April.1864.*, mixed media on board, 2009, 1630x2260 mm
7. *...to walk horizontally along the edge of a word, blinded by sun, to forget what was seen, and what there is, and beneath heel, to gather the fiction of a hill (from "the desert Homeric" by Sally Ann McIntyre)*, mixed media on board, 2011, 1200x4300

Drawing Room

Kim Pieters

4 drawings, mixed media on paper, 2007, 640x900

Anoushka Akel

Three Handed Painting, 2011, oil and pastel on canvas, 300x350

Three Handed Painting, 2011, oil on canvas, 300x350

Small Room

Anoushka Akel

Three Handed Painting,

1. oil on canvas, 2011, 400x450
2. oil on canvas, 2012, 300x350
3. oil and pastel on canvas, 2012, 400x450
4. oil on canvas, 2012, 400x450
5. oil on canvas, 2012, 400x450

Long Room

Kim Pieters

1. *...unrecognizable one from the other sometimes, making moments double upon themselves, and in the doubling double again, amending but never taking back (from Eudora Welty)*, 2009, mixed media on board, 885x1170
2. *in the picture of a hill, a smoke cloud, a lake, a flower, a roar of unspecified dots at the lowline (from Sally Ann McIntyre)*, 2008, mixed media on board, 600x600
3. *the stone bell silent in a cathedral of grass (from Sally Ann McIntyre)*, 2008, mixed media on board, 610x600
4. *men are caught by the cold. They dropped in its snare like-silence (from Eudora Welty)*, 2009, mixed media on board, 970x910
5. *the sky above the castle is now white, Chinese. Three crows slip down the cedar*, 2010, mixed media on board, 590x840

The bench in the main gallery has been created by Michael Parr.