



Conversations in Painting
presents:
Neither/Nor
Arena Gallery,
Liverpool Biennial
2010

The work in the exhibition set out to question the place of painting today, whilst considering the fluid (non-static) potential for painting as a practice. As such it aims to open out questions and debate around these topics.

Submitted by Dr Alistair Payne
Output No.2



OUTPUT

Rationale:

'Tentacular II'
(Installation, 2010)

This exhibition presented the practice of five painters whose work re-examines the philosophical and theoretical underpinning of painting, drawing upon gender, otherness and interdisciplinarity in order to present methods for rethinking and redefining the task of painting.

Each artist was invited to present one work that, through extended discussion, would begin to create a 'conversation' with the other works in the exhibition.

The connections and conjectural relations interweave across each other in order to challenge the viewer/audience to (re-)assess the position or conditions within which painting currently finds itself.

Title

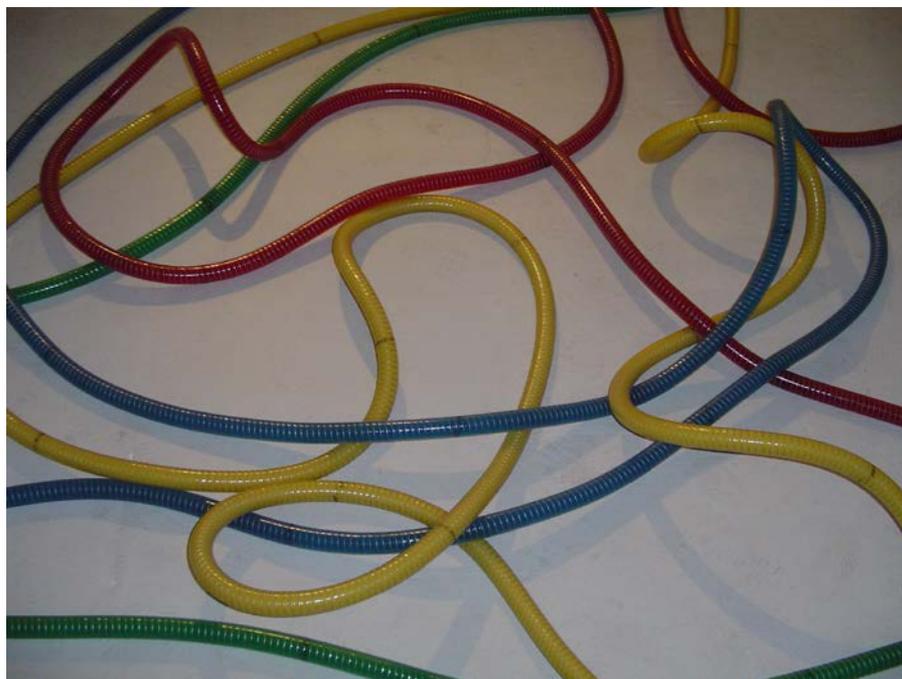
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Submission No.

Output No. 2

Authors/Creators

Dr Alistair Payne



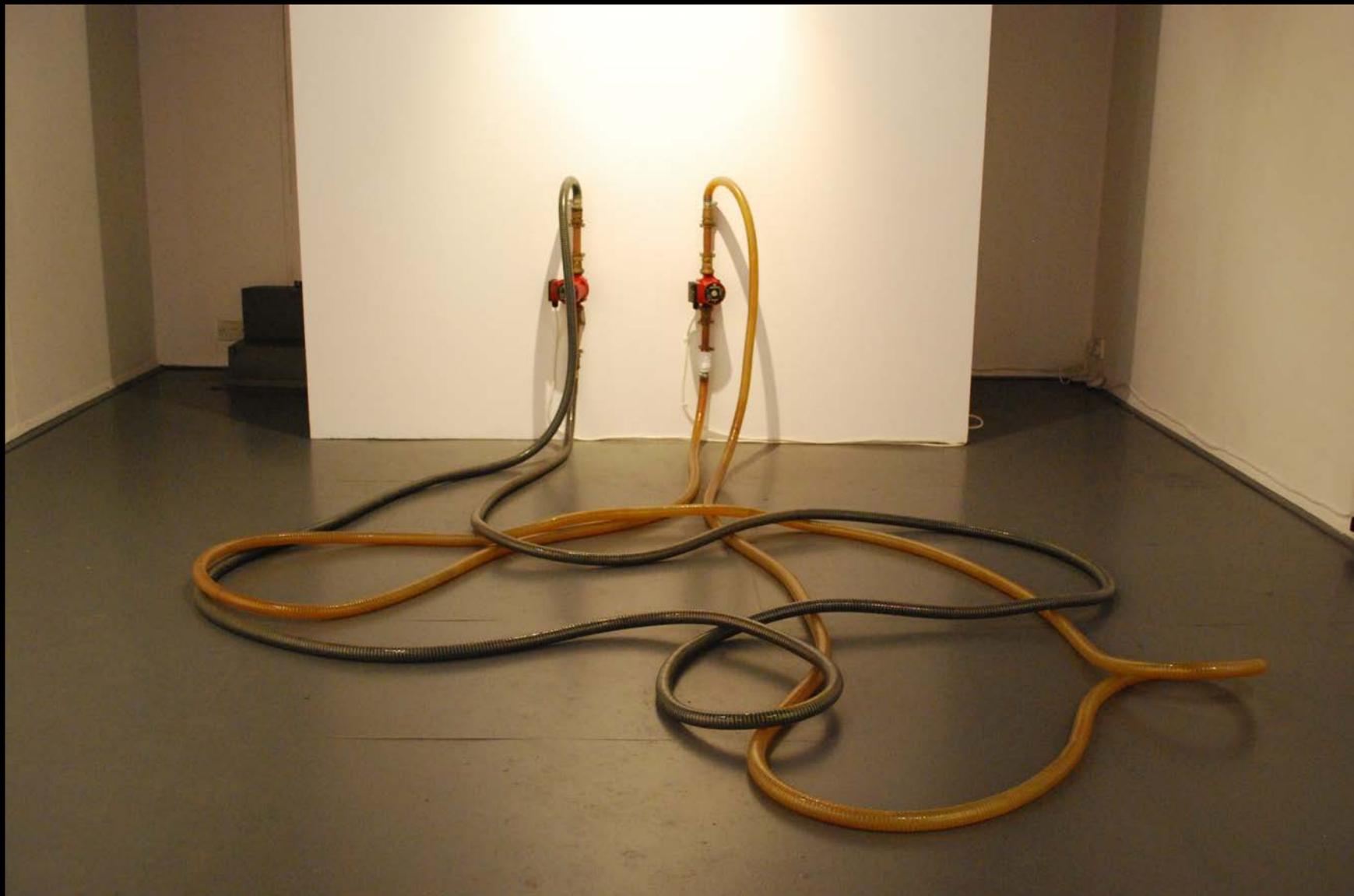
CONTEXT

Research Rationale: The project: 'Conversations in Painting' was initiated in 2009, by Maggie Ayliffe and Dr. Alistair Payne, in order to open discourse around contemporary painting and examine or debate the challenges apparent within the medium today. The focus of this project was to establish discussion between artists (painters) and create a dialogue through which different although connected challenges could be discussed. This approach is evident within other media within fine art practice, but has rarely been approached through the medium of painting.

The installation 'Tentacular II' follows a series of works that have dealt with the interconnectivity between painting practice and architectural space. The ideas embedded (or explored) within the work construct fluidity within the system, working in contrast to the perceived stasis of formal painting practices. The installation (at least this variant) consists of 30 meters of transparent tubing, Grunfos circulation pumps x2, water, food colourant and plumbing connections. 'Tentacular II' is the fifth variation of this form of installation .



Tentacular II
Neither/Nor, Liverpool Biennial
2010



Tentacular
EagleWorks Gallery, solo exhibition.
2010

Conversations in Painting
Presents

Neither/Nor

Maggie Ayliffe
Caroline Cleary
Brendan Fletcher
Simon Harris
Alistair Payne

15 September – 30 September 2010
Arena Studios Gallery, Liverpool

Brendan Fletcher



The plastic forms draw upon the language of abstract painting and graphic iconography. They operate as prototypes for a painting practice that is becoming 'industrialised'. Each work is made up of simple plastic components that fit together in multiple variations of colour. The choice of material is crucial. Plastic is synthetic, inexpensive, easy to manufacture and versatile. It is used to replicate the features of more traditional and expensive organic materials such as wood, stone, metal and leather. This synthetic quality, its ubiquity, and indeed the vulnerability of its surface have led plastic to become a synonym for our ersatz, kitsch and 'throw away' culture.

The plastic surface is however pristine, reflective and opaque and the work sits somewhere between cool industrial minimalism and high kitsch. The vacuum forms take on an almost devotional character and reference both the religious icon and the commercial logo in a conflation of the sacred and secular. Icon is used to describe almost any image that has become fetishised in the popular imagination, and the logo is the most quintessential signifier of capitalist economies; an object of near religious devotion, and one that inspires loyalty and veneration. The contemporary icon/logo has become the bearer of a branded identity and a marker for taste, sensibility and social aspiration. It is these apparent contradictions in the work that in the end cast doubt on the possibility of them actually belonging to either the spiritual or the commercial realms of desire and exchange and they become instead a critical voice that questions the very essence of devotion.

Neither/Nor

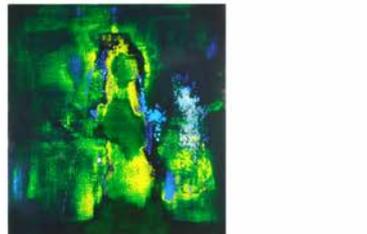
The artists featured in Neither/Nor explore painting as an experimental site in which the traditional criteria by which painting has come to be defined have all but been expunged. Painting that is neither/nor. The artists re-examine the philosophical and theoretical underpinning of painting, drawing upon gender, otherness and inter-disciplinarity, as they attempt to rethink and redefine the task of painting.

In the late 19th century Maurice Denis asked that we 'Remember that a picture before being a war horse or a nude woman or an anecdote, is essentially a flat surface covered with colours assembled in a certain order'. This famous dictum presaged modernism's assault on pictorial form. If we take on Denis's definition we can declare that a painting can be said to consist of pigment and binder, ground and support, affixed to the wall. A painting is in short an object, and that its most characteristic features are its frontality and its capacity to be apprehended in an instant. One might also argue that it is in the labour, craft and devotion to pushing around this fluid viscous substance and its power to transform marks and daubs into pictorial representations that constitute a practice. However, here is the crux. Painting is a practice. It has a history, it is mediated by a discourse. It has become idiomatic and it no longer demands that the manipulation of pigment and binder be its defining characteristic.

Maggie Ayliffe's paintings explore the production, space and narrative of abstraction as a gendered site subject to subversion by the feminine. She employs collaged digital photographs and contiguous impasto paint swatches. Caroline Cleary's work presents painting as a more fluid and dynamic spatial construct in film animations of gestural mark making configurations. Both Ayliffe and Cleary seek to test our ability to make sense and classify the resulting mutations of space and form in an attempt to map the 'other'.

Brendan Fletcher creates mass produced, industrially fabricated, abstract vacuum formed plastic icons. The mythic touch of the painter is erased in the industrial process and yet the form and visual dynamic of the work resonates as a religious icon. Simon Harris paints layer upon layer of pigment and binder, every bit the archetypal painter, and yet his labour and methods aim also to erase any trace of the artists brush and deny the viewer any access to a simple authorial presence. Alistair Payne's dematerialised 'paintings' and installations challenge the very definition of a painting practice. Hardware products, water pumps and pipes are configured to create 3D drawings in space, the speed and rhythm of the line is animated by the pulsating brightly coloured fluid through the pipes. Fletcher provides us with a commodified icon. Harris's reflective surfaces reveal our own search for the painterly moment and Payne undermines the fixity and conviction of the authorial, gestural mark.

Simon Harris



The lure of a chromatic surface, the spatial structuring of 'The Baroque', the affirmation of the absence of an authorial narrative and the inherent illusionistic depths in painting are considered. All are explored as an open invite to question both the interior and exteriority of painting. The picture plane is constructed to oscillate. The resulting activated space can no longer merely maintain the integrity of that picture plane, but has to intensify it.

Through a Deleuzian framework, the concepts of 'haptic' space and 'the fold' are employed in constructing new ways of operating through ideas of space and the encounter within, upon and of painting.

The notion of 'haptic' space as a visual touching of the surface and subsequent layers of space; and the concept of 'the fold' as the hinge between maker, surface and viewer provides a potential philosophical model in order to re-think the illusionist pictorial space.

Through the re-reading of the Baroque, an implicit concept emerges that neither the surface nor the space, the inside or the outside, are in opposition. Principally this is employed to create a receptive layered surface to be encountered.

Through the sensation and awareness of this potentially decadent experience coupled with notions of seduction and beauty the viewer is invited to question an illusion of the real.

Maggie Ayliffe

The radicality of the 'other' resides in its challenge to established systems of power. The language of the 'other' is then by its very nature unstable, informal, deviating and warped.

My paintings are a collage of semiotic chunks which rarely belong to the higher echelons of art and design. They come together on the surface but they do not add up to a single identifiable term. Instead I draw on the domestic and the decorative: embroidery, textiles, fashion and feminine masquerade and most recently plants and gardens. These traditional female pursuits are extremely labour intensive acts of altruism – providing visual pleasure and comfort and maintaining the social, sexual and symbolic codes. They are, however, also the traditional sites of female subversion, duplicity and encoded thinking. A way of finding space in the busy working day for self fulfilment; creativity dressed down as domestic labour. It is some of these characteristics that I want to bring to abstraction. Not to delete the aesthetic and formal idioms of the practice but to shift their meaning through negotiation with the social, feminine and informal realms of the 'other'.

In some ways my recent paintings initiate a simple nature/culture debate; a fluctuating space where nature is played out through a series of constructed and hybrid identities.



Alistair Payne

This practice focuses upon Painting, but reaches out or extends from perceived formal constructs and definitions as a subversive tactic through which external relationships are generated rather than purely focusing upon internal critique or dialogue. My research has been generated through an analysis of the formal characteristics of Painting and how these might be transformed or mutated through the use of alternate media. This is undertaken in the form of changes to the materiality of Painting and concepts relating to stasis and movement, spatiality and frontality.

The ideas behind the work focus upon the notion of difference and otherness and how these concepts might be played out and affect change within, from and to Painting. Painting thus seeps or spreads out into the world, and this deformation affects the space and reading of the work. However, crucially these concepts from the outside are forced to allow Painting to persist. It is through this persistence that painting can become other yet, maintain the vital considerations of itself, or its traditions, and this happens through the multiplicitous interconnectivity of the work.



Caroline Cleary



The paintings are... simple/complex; manual/technical; abstract/figurative; static/animated; subject/object; flat/illusionist; narrative/formal... whilst I allow paint to simply construct the alien thing that challenges the alien thing that we may yet come to know the alien thing that changes us, develops us, transforms us.

Reaching this alien dimension using paint is a way of finding out where the limits of language, culture and society lie and how they can be extended through the communicative power of painting as it connects with people.

My experiments with animation are a route into finding out more about the abstract marks, forms and other visual information in the paintings.

The undoing of devices is very much part of the process of my painting and is the active agent that transforms everything within the work.

I invite the viewer to enter into a journey-to become acquainted with that unknown thing that is forever changing, through repetition and altering, that this thing may become acceptable and even familiar and that has come about wholly from a point of alienation, inacceptance, unfamiliarity and avoidance. What happens when painting meets people-something happens...

Neither/Nor

Presented
by
Conversations in Painting

Conversations in Painting is a curatorial project initiated by the artists Maggie Ayliffe, Brendan Fletcher and Alistair Payne with the express aim to create opportunities for engagement and dialogue with painting as a contemporary art practice.

The exhibition is hosted by Arena Studios as part of The Cooperative programme for the Liverpool Biennial 2010.

Special Thanks:
Emma Sumner, Curator at Arena Studios & Gallery

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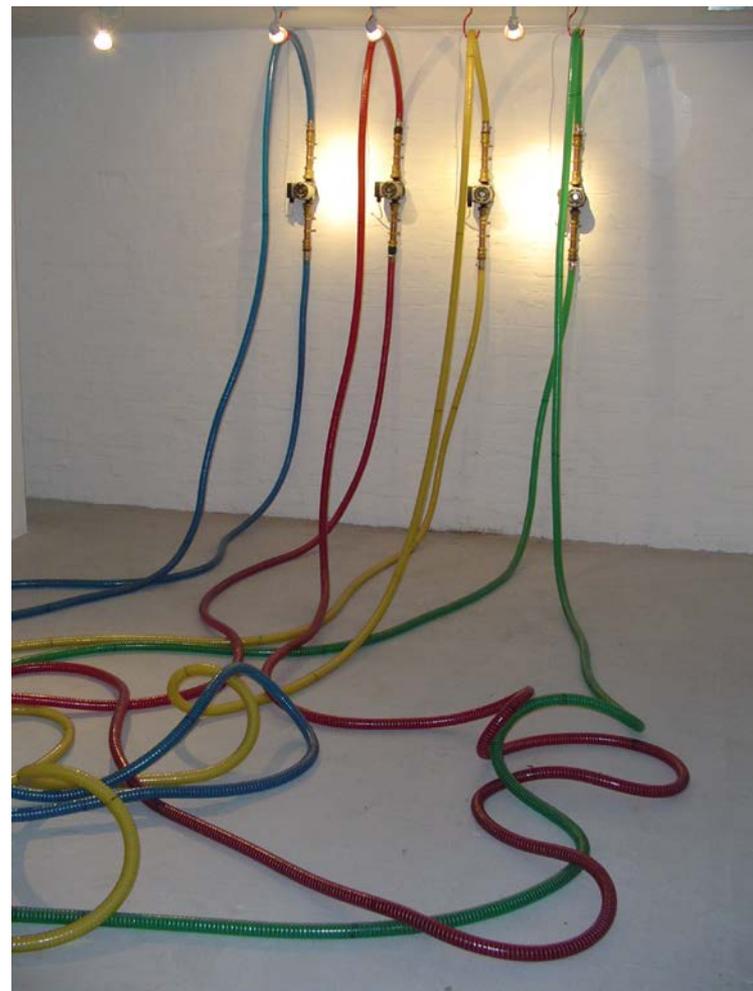


CONTEXT

The project initiators, Ayliffe and Payne were invited to curate the exhibition 'Neither/Nor' at The Liverpool Biennial after the success of two previous ventures, the first project entitled 'Conversations in Painting' was an exhibition held at The Chapman Gallery in Manchester (May 2009), in which the following artefacts were exhibited by Dr. Payne: 'Slip' (Painting, 2009), 'Geyser' (Film, 2009) and 'Tentacular I' (Installation, 2009). This exhibition was closely followed by an International Symposium on Contemporary Painting titled 'Painting as a Material Practice' held at The University of Wolverhampton (September 2009).

Strategies Undertaken:

'Conversations in Painting' is an ongoing project that seeks to establish critical debate and discussion through the medium of painting. This includes exhibitions and symposia/conferences and brings together a wide range of contemporary painters in order to examine the key problematics evident (on an international level) within the medium or condition of painting now. This enables a greater understanding of the task of painting and aims to establish a critical ground upon which complex and at times under or even un-discussed issues can be highlighted and considered.



Circulation II
Exhibited in London

METHODOLOGY

The following slides detail the theoretical strategies undertaken in the research and development of the work for the Neither/Nor exhibition *'Tentacular II'*. This includes a review of work integral to this process, including earlier incarnations of the process and construction of the installational possibilities of the work.

The philosophical notion of the virtual as a multiplicitous space allows connections to be made; it presents bifurcating and divergent paths for thinking through the work, structuring difference from the outset and forcing new arrangements, combinations and configurations. This can be considered in or through external disciplines like architecture (and architectural theory) where a piece of work like *'Tentacular II'*, *'Circulation'* or *'Leviathan's Slumber'* stretches across and away from painting (seeps or spreads out) into the surrounding space, incorporating elements of the architectural surroundings, like the water fittings normally internal to and covered by the walls. These elements allow for colour to be present, to move and flow through the space.



Leviathan's Slumber
(Detail), 2006-2011, Exhibited in London

METHODOLOGY

The architectural, both considerations of the internal architecture and the actual space within which the work is placed, become integral to the work. As a form the work consists of multiple elements, where the considerations of painting, being the initial driver behind the work, are inflected and become morphed into a larger whole. The transformative qualities of the work hinge around the widening (or opening) out and interdisciplinary approach alongside the potential evident within the virtual, which allows the concerns evident within painting to be retained whilst being transformed through the divergent and mutational potential when combined, blended or folded into a complex multiplicity. In terms of painting, the frame (the conventional frame of painting) becomes deformed through the architectural. This happens alongside the deframing of the architectural as well as the deframing of the architectural in reference to its location and the deframing of painting in relation to its architectural site. These combinations allow for a 'fluid' mixing, where the different elements come together, or are actualised in a new form.



Leviathan's Slumber
(Detail), 2006-2011, Exhibited in London

DISSEMINATION

The theoretical context and research undertaken before and during the construction of the work in this exhibition is detailed at length in the following publications:

Digital Media and Technologies for Virtual Artistic Spaces

ISBN: 978-1-4666-2961-5

Edited by Professor Dew Harrison

Chapter title:

The Virtual and Interdisciplinarity

Dr Alistair Payne

Published by IGI Global in April 2013

pp. 105-116

Painting as an Interdisciplinary Form

ISBN: 978-3836454605

Dr Alistair Payne

Published by VDM Verlag in July 2008

DISSEMINATION

The work within this show follows ongoing research that has also been disseminated through the following exhibitions (outwith the Neither/Nor exhibition):

Forthcoming:

Indisciplinary Behaviour

Rom8 gallery, Bergen, Norway, 2014

The Ends of Art

Beton7 Gallery, Athens, Greece, 2013

Radically Un-Hinged

EagleWorks Gallery, UK, 2011

Conversations in Painting

Chapman Gallery, Manchester, 2009

Ebb and Flow

RAID Projects Gallery, Los Angeles, USA, 2007

Ebb and Flow

Three Colts Gallery, London 2006

Three Rooms

Chelsea College of Art, London, 2005