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
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.
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
Neither/Nor

Maggie Ayliffe

Caroline Cleary

Brendan Fletcher

Simon Harris

Alistair Payne

15 September – 30 September 2010

Arena Studios Gallery, Liverpool

Neither/Nor

The articles featured in Neither/Nor explore painting as an experimental site in which the traditional orders of which painting has come to be defined have all but been considered to exist. It is this that is neither/nor. To see the articles in these are the phenomena of both the theoretical and practical operations of painting. Becoming from processes, this work is the boundary of the site-near-disparity, as they attempt to rethink and reframe the sites of painting.

The radicality of the ‘other’ reveals its challenge to established systems of power. The language of the ‘other’ is free by its very nature unstable, informal, and deviant.

The paintings are a collage of semi-abstracts which carry overlying lines to the higher altitudes of art and design. They are torn to the surface but they do not add up to a single identifiable term. Instead I draw on the domestic and the decorative, ornamentary, ornamental, and decorative to the menial and everyday. These traditional aesthetic pursuits are extensively involved in the acts of abstraction: dispelling visual pleasure and comfort in maintaining the social, temporal, and material codes.

We conclude with a ‘menial’ and ‘ornamentary’ approach, one in which the menial is a deviant, and the ornamentary is a challenging. A way of finding space in the busy everyday life by self-fulfillment, in the domain of the deviant, is to consider the traces of the characteristics that I am drawn to bring to abstraction. Not to delete the aesthetic and formal structure of the objects but to shift their meaning through negotiation with the social, temporal, and informal make(s) of the other.

In some ways, these paintings make a semi-transparent narrative. A narrative is played out through a series of constructed and hybrid identities.

Maggie Ayliffe

Caroline Cleary

Brendan Fletcher

Simon Harris

Alistair Payne

15 September – 30 September 2010

Arena Studios Gallery, Liverpool

Neither/Nor

The problems are explicitly political, social, technological, philosophical, historical, and structural. The installation of, and the expression of, the political, social, and structural operators of painting is possible, so that it is not only a means of resistance but also a means of understanding our social relations. It is a time of change, and this has something to do with the real. The future of our social relations is in the making. What happens when painting meets politics – something happens...
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.
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 amnd 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
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
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
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