



ART CIRCUS REVIEW

Q&A with Andy Harper

June 20, 2013

Andy Harper is an artist based in the UK and is represented by Danese in New York, Morgen Contemporary in Berlin and The Page Gallery in Seoul.



Does the new collection of paintings come with a new set of mark making techniques? The floating blue curls for example.

I want the pace of making to be reflected in the new paintings. Viewers were fooled by the level of detail in the previous work and couldn't reconcile the level of rendering yielded by what in reality was a very quick and fluid way of working. Many of my paintings from that period (2004-2010) were made in a day and never took more than a week. So although I haven't totally re-invented how I work, I have consciously avoided the vocabulary of marks I acquired during that period. I still utilise a membrane of oily paint that is wet and totally malleable during the production of the painting, but the marks are now more direct and not dependent on motifs or a bag of tricks.



The painting process has become more like the activity of drawing than ever before, it's able to record decisions and embody thought itself.

There seems to be something playful and excited about the new work. Do you see this and was this something you felt when making them?

Right now I feel like my approach to work and my sense of myself are well matched. People, in reference to older work, often referred to me as obsessive or a perfectionist, I'm neither of these things. The attitude of one's work has to fit with your own disposition, otherwise making it day after day will become drudgery.

Your older paintings appear very organic; as if you let the piece evolve naturally. Were they created in this way or were they meticulously planned?

The older works were painted surfaces to resemble various forms of vegetation. I haven't painted plant forms for a few years now, but the way the paintings evolve during their making is still organic in a manner of speaking. Unfolding over time, the paintings share an attitude to making as the older work, which despite its appearance was never meticulously planned.

What does painting on a 3D surface add to a painting? Is it a Sculpture or a 3D painting?



It's not what it adds I have to worry about, it's what it can take away that pre-occupies me. Whenever I paint on a non-conventional surface – such as the series of spherical paintings I made between 2005 and 2011 – there must be a very good reason for using this format. And the work must always work as a painting first, they are never sculptures for me.

Is there a particular reaction you would like from viewers looking at the new paintings?

No, this idea feels me with horror. I want a discussion about the stuff I haven't seen myself yet.



What do you find more satisfying, the process or the final product?



This is hard to say. The final product for me is an exhibition in which various ideas about the work start to come together and make sense and connections form like neural pathways. This is obviously very gratifying but in order to get to this position you have to be happy in the studio with the work you are undertaking and the processes you are using.

What kind of artwork would you make if you had a warehouse of artists working for you?

I'd probably produce crap. I have tried working with an assistant before and for one particular project it worked out, but I found it difficult to manage someone else. I presume with lots of people I would have to devise painting workshops where I tap the very different physical and mental sensibilities towards the matter of paint. I'm running a collaborative painting workshop with young adults at Newlyn Art Gallery as part of my show there. Perhaps after this I'll start looking for a warehouse.



How does teaching affect your own practice?

It affects my sense of rigour. After giving students a hard time about their work and ideas, it's harder to be soft on yourself.

Do you feel it's harder for art students leaving art school now or maybe easier with the different ways to promote their work?

I don't think it's harder or easier, but things have of course changed. If I think about it in terms of my own experience of leaving college, some things seem easier and others harder, but it isn't my reality, it's theirs and so naturalised to them.

How has your work developed since your last show and what excites you about the new show?



The work is much looser in appearance, and the associations are much freer. The work is able to wander between references and cover a much broader set of ideas. It is a much more honest reflection of how my own head works.

Do you feel a sort of clarity with the new work, as if your practice had been leading up to this?

Clarity, wouldn't that be great, but also deathly. Nothing is ever totally clear, at best things are just about to fall into place or everything will make sense around the next corner. It is this elusiveness of clarity that drives the work. Perhaps what went wrong with the previous body of work is that I worked out what I was doing.