

Laura Buckley

PAINTBOX FOR EVA

Film Installation, 2006

Review by Hannah Vaughn

Symbolic of many things, the mirror has come to stand as a metaphor for painting. Offering a virtual gateway through which to see the represented world, each mirror is an image in and of itself, it's framed illusion an apprehension of the real. Such allusion to the painted surface has long fascinated artists, to whom the myriad angles and reflections are as mesmerising as the world outside. Exemplifying the ambiguous relation between reality and artifice, the mirror embodies the very essence of painting and exists as the ideal medium through which to explore the demystification of artistic process.

Presenting four works in series, Laura Buckley's recent move into video reveals an exploration of painting and illusion that unites the decorative with the filmic, the actual with artifice in a challenge to the perceived limitations of painting.

With each film edited to form a series of rapid frames, the artist's fleeting visuals reveal the creation and deconstruction of abstract composition. Light and form flutter across the screen in a hypnotic visual dance, the ephemeral colours and occasional figure imbuing each projection with dreamlike properties. Vibrant hues affirm the primacy of pleasure and point up the playful quality of the work. Poured directly onto the mirrored surface, or drizzled and daubed across the canvas, paint appears pleasing in its brightly saturated colours. Fraught with complex potential interpretation, the bold materiality of the paint is flattened and put in conflict with the infinite depth of the mirror, which serves to confound the image, our understanding of illusionistic space challenged by the dense opacity of a material more typically employed in the service of representation. A seemingly arbitrary reflection of trees, caught within one reflective surface, (*Mirror Painting*), contrasts with the vibrant hues of man made paint as reality and artifice are allowed to mingle in a unified space.

Buckley's interest in the literal and abstract components of her works, which consist of surface and paint, reality and illusion, lead her to explore aspects of a work of art that is not visible, aspects that conventional painting masks. Seen pouring the paint and rearranging mirrored supports, Buckley enters into her own aesthetic, a modern day Alice in her own Wonderland. Shown as part of the creation, and not simply as the creator, Buckley's revelation of artistic process includes the viewer within the practice of painting, just as her installation literally includes the viewer within the work.

In an inversion of the typical white cube, the projections reveal themselves in a blackened space, the dramatic setting making direct reference to the artifice of theatre and stage. Functioning as a symbolic entrance into the mirrored world, this blackened cube forms a visual link to the films. With a partially mirrored ceiling, the installation draws the subject from the video and simultaneously includes the viewer within its frame. That which is represented becomes real, and in turn, the viewer becomes part of the illusion.

Buckley's projections cannot be described as pictorial. They do not offer three-dimensionality compressed into a picture when seen from a single, static point of view. It does make sense, however, to describe her colourful, constantly shifting scenarios as painterly. Their small scale conjures an intimacy more typical of the painted picture, while their lo-fi quality points up the presence of the artist's hand. Disorientating and kaleidoscopic, Buckley's visual landscapes are mindbogglingly layered. The aesthetic of her work may defy neat categorisation or defined pattern, but instead we are shown new meaning in objects thought to be understood and strange beauty in what was once the everyday.