

## MICHAEL FULLERTON

*Prussian Blue (Part Two)*

5<sup>th</sup> June – 25<sup>th</sup> July 2015

*'It is only shallow people who do not judge by appearances. The true mystery of the world is the visible, not the invisible....'*

– Oscar Wilde

*'If I believe in something I sell it and sell it hard'* – Estée Lauder

*'Language is a skin: I rub my language against the other'* – Roland Barthes

*'All our knowledge begins with the senses'* – Immanuel Kant

This body of paintings is on some level a simple exploration of, and experimentation with, painting technique and styles. The paintings flirt with the idea that the aesthetic impact of painting – a painting's beauty – can be an end in itself outside of any further conceptual justification. The subjects of the paintings are all selected from recent fashion magazine advertisements for make up, jewellery and beauty products. They are not selected arbitrarily but are specially chosen for the quality of lighting and detail in the face that could be later exploited in oils to render a sense of intimacy required for a traditional portrait painting.

One technique experimented with is that of grisaille underpainting – the monochrome underpainting is completed first with colour applied in subsequent layers. Thus the colour – being added later – is applied almost like 20th century cosmetics. This is then combined with the background glow typical of 18th century portraits. This background glow is not insignificant: 18th century landscape painting is where nature, which speaks directly to the senses, and the beauty of nature is full of meaning in and of itself. The glow of the 18th century sunset in the background of many of these paintings is the epitome of the sublime – where the sensual is supremely meaningful.

Thus the show is somewhat self-reflexive in that the subject matter – mass media representations of the beautiful and the advertising of beauty products is used as the basis for an enquiry into the formal and symbolic effectiveness of the painted surface as a transmitter of emotional information.

The title of the exhibition, *Prussian Blue*, is significant because it is one of the first synthetic modern pigments. It is therefore divorced from the traditional method of making oil paints that were natural earth-based pigments. It serves as a metaphor for the nature versus culture debate within contemporary painting.

Karen Graham who features in *One Beautiful Drop* (2015) was a legendary model whose fame was achieved through her enduring presence in Estée Lauder's advertising campaigns. The company began employing

her in 1970 to appear in their print ads, and she worked with Chicago photographer Victor Skrebneski. She was employed so frequently that by 1973, she became Estée Lauder's exclusive spokes-model. It was a job she would do for the rest of the decade, appearing in print and television ads that presented her in tasteful, elegant, generously appointed tableaux - a parlor, a drawing room, a veranda. In these ads, Graham was never identified by name, which Estée Lauder herself admitted was deliberate. Many people, unfamiliar with the fashion and modeling world, thought Graham was, in fact, Mrs. Lauder. The ads were a reflection of Mrs. Lauder's own idea of a woman of taste and sophistication. Skrebneski was happy to oblige, decorating his sets with Chinese vases, Pablo Picasso ceramics, and well-stocked bookshelves.

Estée Lauder is part of Fullerton's long-standing interest in women pioneers. He has painted Lady Hazel Cosgrove, first female judge in Scotland and Violet Szabo, who fought for the French resistance in WW2, and more recently Catherine Graham, the American media magnate. Lauder was the only woman on Time magazine's 1998 list of the 20 most influential business geniuses of the 20th century.

Michael Fullerton (b. 1971, Bellshill, Scotland) studied at the Glasgow School of Art and is currently based in Glasgow. This is his third exhibition at the gallery. Recent solo shows include S1 Art Space, Sheffield (2015), Greene Naftali, New York (2014), Glasgow Print Studio, Glasgow (2014), and Chisenhale Gallery, London (2010). Michael's work will also be included in Tate Britain's group show 'Fighting History' from 9<sup>th</sup> June 2015 until 13<sup>th</sup> September. From September, he will have a solo room of new work at Scottish National Galleries, Edinburgh.

The exhibition will be open from Tuesday – Friday 11 – 6 pm and Saturday 12 – 6 pm, otherwise by appointment. For images and further information please contact the gallery on 020 7684 8890, or email [info@carlfreedman.com](mailto:info@carlfreedman.com)