

Benjamin Senior

Parade

Opening
Thursday 3 December 2015
6.30 pm

Exhibition
3 December - 27 February

Hours
Tuesday – Saturday
3 – 7 pm

“The history of realist painting has always carried the hidden pleasures of composition; while abstract art thought to do away with the image in the name of “pure” form. But Senior lets abstraction’s ideal of flat design clash with the illusion of depth, each contradicting the other, both tangled in a strange embrace. Somewhere in Senior’s paintings is the question of who, in a painting, the human figure addresses, of whether that figure is a subject or an object, of who is looked at and who does the looking. A question about the nature of this peculiar screen we call a painting, and the world we see upon it.”

JJ Charlesworth, Art Review, October 2015

For his second exhibition at Monica De Cardenas , Benjamin Senior displays a series of paintings which expand his rigorously composed painterly world to embrace the dynamic, fragmentary experience of the street and the shopping arcade. A multicultural cast of characters fill the scene reading newspapers or browsing furniture shops. A startled dog strains against its leash in the painting *The Hound* (2015). There are contemplative moments as commuters and pedestrians are glimpsed at close quarters such as at the train station in the painting *Seamer* (2015).

Characteristically of Senior’s work there is a classicizing stillness that pauses the figures in the middle of their actions. Yet there is a dynamism running through the paintings that stems from their rhythmic structure rather than expressive brushwork.

Senior delves deep into the tradition of painting, from the street scenes of Jean Helion to the tonal arrangements of Georges Seurat and the parade paintings of the early Renaissance, to create a world that is both old and new. A recurring motif in this exhibition is the worm’s-eye perspective typical of Mantegna in which monumental figures walk along the bottom edge of the picture, silhouetted against the architecture of a grand arcade.

Observing the world directly, the artist’s work begins with drawing - either fast sketches made in the street or sessions of painting and drawing from the model in the studio. Included in the exhibition are a series of nudes which evoke the traditional practice of the artist and model. These paintings challenge the viewer’s gaze, interrupting or fragmenting the figure with studio furniture and assimilating the body into the rhythm of the painting.

Benjamin Senior was born in 1982 and he lives in London, where he received MA in painting from the Royal College of Art in 2010. He held solos exhibitions at Bolte Lang, Zurich, at James Fuentes in New York, at Studio Voltaire in London and at Grey Noise in Dubai. Residencies and awards include; Kingsgate Workshops Trust Residency 2011 – 2012 and the Gordon Luton Prize for Painting, 2010.