

Victoria Morton
Spoken Yeahs From A Distance

07 June – 09 July 2016
1 Davies St London W1
Tuesday – Saturday, 11 – 6pm

In her fifth show at Sadie Coles HQ, Victoria Morton presents four large-scale paintings alongside a group of smaller canvases. In these, she continues her long-term exploration of painting as both a psychological mode and a physical experience.

Playing with the nature of image construction and the physicality of perception, Morton constructs a “narrative of sensations” in which personal and historical references intersect. She describes her latest paintings as producing a “concertina effect”: space alternately dilates and collapses. Pictures begin to cohere out of threadlike lines and translucent planes – landscapes, windows, the shades of human bodies. Yet each canvas is equally an abstract open field, composed of layered and interlocking colour.



Morton in this way captures the pure optical sensations which precede the formation of images in the mind. Each painting teeters on the threshold of a readable image, while never crossing into graspable figuration. Accordingly, the works are full of internal thresholds – floating diagonals, fragile gridlines – which run between their translucent pools and denser blocks of colour. The larger works have evolved through an experimental process of composition and erasure. Veils of paint accumulate on the canvas so as to imply recessive space, whether a windowed interior or a mountainous vista. Loosely perceptible – sometimes giant – body parts inhabit these ambiguous zones. Morton also inserts more precise ‘punctuation marks’: a bright-red orb hovers like a moon in *New Body On The Wing* (2016), disrupting the picture’s otherwise cool palette; while in other pieces, linear marks encroach on the composition like overhanging foliage.

Romantic overtones thereby collide with more winsome touches. Morton has remarked: “I like the fact that sometimes the paintings hover on the borderline between kitsch and playfulness.” *Bo Pull Up* (2016) has a more specific point of origin. The work is based on a photograph of a girl emerging from a swimming pool, which Morton progressively teased apart, leaving a residual impression of a body dripping with water, and a broken surface. The motif of the bather ties her work into an art-historical lineage – from Hockney to Seurat and Impressionism – in which the surface of water acts as a metaphor for the illusionism of painting itself. In this instance, the impression of water gives way to more concrete shapes in the lower half of the picture – hard-edged shelves of colour which extend (as if breaking out of the picture) to confront the viewer.

Reflection, as both an optical effect and mental act, is a prevailing aspect of Morton’s latest works – expressed in the very act of composition. In *Bo Pull Up* and *Spoken Yeahs From A Distance*, the form of the tree outside the gallery – and reflected, at times, in the glass – is translated into a structural motif, rendering the paintings subtly site-specific. The smaller canvases, on display upstairs, are more immediate and direct (some of them painted in a single session). Yet they compress – in harder, faster marks – the same concerns as the larger works, playing out the ideas of psychological representation, cognition, music and memory which have come to define her practice.

Victoria Morton (b. 1971, Glasgow) studied at Glasgow School of Art. She has exhibited internationally. Solo exhibitions include *Mouth Wave*, Rat Hole Gallery, Tokyo (2014); *Tapestry (Radio On)*, Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum, Boston (MA), USA (2012); Inverleith House, Edinburgh (2010); *Sun By Ear (with Katy Dove)*, Tramway, Glasgow (2007); Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, Germany, 2002; and Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh (2001). Recent group exhibitions include *Devils in the Making*, Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow (2015); *Generation: 25 Years of Contemporary Art in Scotland*, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh (2014); and *That Petrol Emotion*, Metropolitan Art Society, Beirut (2014). Victoria Morton lives and works in Glasgow and Fossombrone, Italy.

For further information please contact the gallery at +44 (0)20 7493 8611 or press@sadiecoles.com