

Victoria Morton

03 February – 26 March 2011
69 South Audley St London W1

For her latest show at Sadie Coles HQ, Victoria Morton is presenting an extensive series of paintings, encompassing large-scale oils on canvas, works in watercolour and ink, and free-standing assemblages of paintings and found objects.

Morton has described her painting as “explicit abstract realism”. Intricate and multilayered, her works simultaneously suggest flux and stasis, dissolution and materialisation. Recent canvases *Figurine* and *Soft Eaters Hard Eaters* (both 2009) interweave free-floating pools of colour with clusters of pointillist specks; lines thread through the compositions to create delicate internal structures that simultaneously bind and divide pictorial space. A number of paintings suggest shifts in perspective and scale within a range of compositional means that attempt to slow down the act of looking. Elsewhere Morton strikes a more subdued note, as in the ethereal masses of *Wah Wah* (2010).

Morton perceives her works as sites of potential that invite imaginative projection and interpolation. They explore what the philosopher Richard Wollheim seminally termed “seeing in” or the “two-foldness” of an actual experience of the surface and an imaginary experience of the subjects represented by breaking this phenomenon down into fragmented pieces of reconfigurational and recognitional awareness. Her painting engages with a “historic dialogue”, comparing the tradition of painting to the transmission of folk music where “songs or themes or genres get passed down through all the generations, and they still have a meaning for people.” Yet her work avoids straightforward quotation, maintaining an idiom that is distinctively her own.

In their accumulation and splitting of layers and nexus of forms, Morton’s works not only document the painting process (“the Brechtian idea of showing the mechanics of production”) but also function as “records of mental movement”, of “interiority”, or of “an internalized system of emotions that are not always connected to the world of speech and the rational”. Certain objects – a postcard, book, or photographic print – appear to be the literal remnants and mementos of experience. *After the Tempest* and *Untitled* (2010) incorporate Sputnik-style stands. *Ballet Costume* (2010) is the remains of a garment used for a dance performance; fronds of painted tissue are suspended from a clothes stand.

Morton continues to work with the extended space of painting. *Head* (2009) edges into figuration and has been placed, incongruously, at the viewer’s feet. Other paintings are supported within tentative, sculptural assemblages of objects where the customised pedestal or frame forms part of the work. Double-sided painted bed-heads invite us to circumvent them in the style of sculptures. Approximating items of furniture, these recent works become directly physical and graphic. They address the dramatic relationship between a viewer and the artworks so that potentially the viewer can become a participant or the subject.

Morton has spoken of paintings as “psychological objects”. She says “They can take on the characteristics of personalities. They can represent the space of the body in several ways”

Victoria Morton (b. 1971, Glasgow) studied at Glasgow School of Art. She has exhibited internationally. Solo exhibitions include Inverleith House, Edinburgh, 2010; *Sun By Ear* (with Katy Dove), Tramway, Glasgow, 2007; Bonner Kunstverein, Bonn, Germany, 2002; and Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, 2001. Last year she took part in a collaborative workshop with Scottish Ballet. Group exhibitions include *In Viaggio*, Museo Corta Alta, Fossombrone, Italy, 2004, and *Painting Not Painting* with Jim Lambie, Julie Roberts, and Richard Slee at Tate St Ives, Cornwall, 2003. In 2011 she will exhibit with Martin Boyce and Eva Rothschild in a show at Almine Rech Gallery, Paris. In 2012 she will present a solo exhibition for the inauguration of Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum’s new contemporary art galleries, Boston. Victoria Morton lives and works in Glasgow and Fossombrone, Italy.