

Anna WHITE

Paintings

1-25 June 2005

Anna White's exhibition *Paintings* explores the point at which painting and the world fold into one another. Her delicate distillations of light, colour and mark shift scale continuously between landscape and the microscopic. This sensibility approaches a biological paradigm, suggesting a natural order or mode for art-making; placing the viewer within nature as though witnessing a shadow cast by sunlight or frost upon a windowpane.

Calling the exhibition *Paintings* is itself provocative. These highly printerly works are created by placing paper over thinned oil paint; the pigment distilled in linseed oil. The monoprint then becomes the locus of acute critical evaluation by the artist. Many of the experiments, like hybrids of genetically modified crops, fail to become self-sustaining. This Rorschach-like process unifies the painting as a single mark or 'hit'. The usual narrative or history embedded in a painting is replaced by a horizontal moment or 'geography' of the medium itself.

White's process is accordingly inextricably linked to a kind of organic unfolding in which, on occasion and through careful selection, the poetic is situated. These 'seeds' of potential are activated by the viewer who may see the work as a discrete body or event, with a lucid (if baroque) outline, or as a fragment of an expanded landscape, over-flowing the boundary of its rectangular frame.

The most singular aspect of White's practice is the moment when the work reads as both ontological event and pictorial sensation. Her mercurial, shape-shifting images become both signifier and signified: describing a condition of flux, in which figure and ground, image and abstraction become simultaneous. The viewer is reminded of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, his epic poem in which gods become landscapes and men become monsters; seemingly a Rubik's Cube of changing states, the human and the natural (or animal, mineral and vegetable) passing freely through one another.

Myth perhaps functions as a repository for such transgressions, a place in which such glorious grotesquery can be eulogised, rather than condemned; and Ovid's collection similarly demonstrates virtuoso handling of form along with a sharper implicit political critique. White's practice also appears multi-layered, its acknowledgment of an essential evolution countered by an irresistible Romantic fascination with beauty. Perhaps White's work achieves that sensation of awe identified as the sublime; her images, appropriately, hovering just beyond comprehension.