

A Review of Colour, Order, System at Sid Motion Gallery, London

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Colour, Order, System, Installation view, courtesy of Sid Motion Gallery

Approaching Sid Motion Gallery from King's Cross Station, the bricks become a little bit redder, the pavement less uniform and Pret exchanged for a London Kebab; the London of launderers and takeaways lives quietly in terraced accessory to the fresh neighborhood of Google and Gagosian. It is hard not to feel nostalgic upon seeing this gallery's former William Hill site, replete with musty tiles, metal roller shutter and neon signage.

The gallery, which has this June celebrated one year since its opening, feels a staple of its surroundings and the latest show *Colour, Order, System* has as much dialogue with the street outside as it does between the works inside. Bringing together four artists, owner and director Sid Motion – the gallery's namesake – has curated a show of delicate proportions and

affiliations, and the title provides a rigorous underpinning of all the works on view.

Richie Culver's canvases are large in trio across the north wall and are balanced with a modest cluster hang of Sue Kennington and Roland Hicks' smaller works on the south. His paintings are but part of his broad practice that encompasses photography and text-based works. In this context they read as debased symbology, dense in their application of material with subtle shapes that effervesce through the shifting white.

Titles like *No one knows me like Dawn from the Job Centre* (2017) and *Get a trade to fall back on* (2017) provide a heavy narrative for otherwise such muted abstractions. The works are laden with Polycell (plaster filler) and lacquer, they are a tradesman's Sunday painting, and in spite of the shimmering surface, they are bulky, dirty and awkwardly assembled. Culver aligns the paintings with a working class, attempting to make the political gestural – structure clad with chaos.

Roland Hicks' works are unnerving in their execution, and provide a fantastic counterpoint to the paintings of Culver. Gouache, paper and coloured pencil are refashioned to mimic the texture of plywood and OSB in absurd detail; an immaculate rendering of what is otherwise junk – a prevailing theme of his oeuvre. Hicks forces us to engage with its utilitarian and artistic capabilities. We are challenged by the social implications, and moreover with the material negotiation, of the objects making.

The pieces are modest in scale and in composition, these works are complex in the smallest of ways, and Hicks' titles attest to that: *OSB 30 (Our shoulders brushed)* (2017), *OSB 12 (On southern beaches)* (2017). As with the work of Culver the titles contribute a loaded narrative, here they can be Romantic, banal and full of movie-like cliché – because the works are sentimental, if only for their love of the loser.



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Upon entering the gallery's space, it is Culver's large works that glare from across the room, but it is Hicks' and Sue Kennington's paintings arranged in a sporadic grouping on the nearside wall that coolly greet us. Their palette sharing similar hues and compositional taste should make this an uneventful hang, but the work of both artists contains elaborate microcosms of detail that create a network of associations in the mark making, structure and form. It is a real pleasure to look at these works that are small in scale but so surface rich.

Kennington's paintings are nearer to Howard Hodgkin than they are to Sean Scully; gesture is important here, as equally as composition is. The surfaces are light and breathe through thinly applied oil paint. The tension between artist and artwork is at its peak, where colour distinguishes form the painting can become its own animal. Whilst in a work like *Citrus Thighs* (2017) we see the composition swell and droop, she maintains a quiet discipline with the bodies of colour. The paintings are an organic (if not human) manifestation of this relationship between order and system, and they call out the works of Hicks and Culver on the under- and overuse of the gestural form.



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Fiona Grady's work bookends the exhibition – her vinyl window drawing *Umbra Slip* (2017) is outside as much as in. The fluttering light through the trees, passing pedestrians and cars all transition through these blue and pink lenses before projecting across the gallery floor. The work brings the street into the gallery, in the same vein as Hicks and Culver. For something that appears graphical and rigid, its functionality could not be more abstract. Grady's work encapsulates, for me, what *Colour, Order, System* feels like it speaks to: a repurposing of structures to accommodate the human body. The work abides by and subverts the title's dictate.

Situated between old style canal-zone Camden and the fresh-faced Euston Road expanse of concrete, therefore, this exhibition speaks volumes about the human intervention in the chameleon urban space. The artworks function as a harmonious collective, which attests to the careful eye and curation of Sid Motion herself. It represents a promising future for the young gallery that proves balancing commercial necessity with pure artistic merit, does not mean having to forego curatorship or an engagement with

contemporary dialogues.

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