

SIMON EDMONDSON

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Simon Edmondson*Nicola Jacobs Gallery*

Here are large, very impressive and quite unpretentious pictures by a young and intensely perceptive painter. The most immediately striking quality of his vision is perhaps its delicacy and yet its force. Compositions are strong and content, quietly dramatic; but paint is stroked on gently in layers and veils of clear, smooth colour, sharp yet sweet. There is frequently a distinctive palette of ochre, pink, violet and yellow — slivers of paint and light and larger smooth areas setting up vibrant colour rhythms. Occasionally the organisation of a picture or the gesture of a figure is reminiscent of other artists. Here may be Bacon for instance, there is a hint of Degas or early Pasmore. But although such echoes could suggest the early works of an artist finding his own vision, these paintings seem to show not only a sensitivity to the perception of other artists but a remarkable, individualistic way of seeing.

While there is respect for and a delight in those time-honoured painterly, abstract and structural values of composition, colour and texture there are also metaphorical and allusive qualities which seem peculiarly contemporary. Paintings such as 'Babel's Bricks' and 'Goddess' are intriguing not only as abstract arrangements of shape and colour but as mysterious symbols. In other paintings are the voids of unpeopled spaces; and women, always alone, wrapped at their looking glasses, cut off in sleep, or isolated by some gesture or state. 'Widow', where there is an echo of Bacon, is nevertheless an outstanding image of loneliness; 'Bride' suggests goddess and victim, or perhaps a young Miss Haversham, isolated at the occasion symbolic of union. These paintings create dramatic atmospheres: this is not a conceptual but a deeply thought out perceptual art. (to Jul 10) CAROLINE COLLIER