



Jess MacNeil

Front top: *Cy and Agnes*, 2005, oil and graphite on linen, 41 x 123 cm

Front bottom: *Could Go Either Way*, 2005, oil and graphite on acrylic colour-canvas, 112 x 153 cm

Back top : *Inverse*, 2005, oil and graphite on linen, 122 x 183 cm

Back bottom: *Grotty Little Corner (self portrait)*, 2002, peeled paint on wall, approx. 400 x 300 x 150 cm, photo: Sue Blackburn

Above: *Verse*, 2005, oil and graphite on acrylic colour-canvas, 122 x 183 cm

Right: *Agnes*, 2005, oil and graphite on acrylic colour-canvas, 183 x 122 cm



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Above: *Tropical Centre: Arc*, 2005, oil and graphite on linen, 152 x 229 cm



Above right: *Tropical Centre: Pyramid*, 2005, oil and graphite on acrylic colour-canvas, 168 x 198 cm

### Painting Notes

The subjects of my paintings are personal snapshots. Pictorial elements found in the photograph are used as the foundations upon which to lay a less authoritative, more enigmatic, construction of 'reality'. These images question assumed methods of 'knowing' space, and disallow our habit of ascribing it fixed and relational proportions. Instability is a feature. The structures insinuated by the lines remaining lack fixity, often seeming to float.

Unpainted areas within the works operate as another painting tool: compositionally, texturally and in terms of content. Their influence on the composition as areas of 'blank' canvas asserts a destabilising absence and mocks our desire for completion. At the same time they create solid blocks of colour that have a strong pictorial presence. These unusual shapes alternately seem to bear into the image, or are buoyed up by it. In either case they provide an experiential, open, roaming space, ordering the linkages made between the painted elements, but loosely.

The resultant space described is partly anchored, partly floating. We are pulled further away from the familiar logic of photographic representation, and into a new formation that bears more resemblance to the way images colonise the psyche and the memory, reconfiguring themselves in a sideways relationship to their original source. The slippage between the perception of a place, and the place itself is emphasized, as is the slippage involved in making a visual record. The possession implied by the act of photographing ('taking'

a photograph) slips away, leaving instead an enigmatic absence. In such a way the paintings speak of translation; of communication, interpretation, and its gaps.

Temporality is integral to the experience of painting. The time taken to make a painting is juxtaposed against the internal time of the image presented - its subject matter and aesthetic rhythm - and collapsed into a single moment of experience. Both my process and the photographic subject matter emphasize this: the slow labour of the painting process is in contrast to the photographic instant from which it is drawn, and a temporal collision results. The visibility of raw linen or coloured canvas and the graphite lines of the 'under-drawing' suggest an arbitrary or open-ended state of finish, inviting perceptual participation in the activity of the work.

Painting is not merely a vehicle for representing the data of the photographic image, or of adding to, altering, or subtracting from this data, but is approached as an event in itself. The process by which I paint means a work can only progress in a forwards direction. Once an area of background is covered it cannot be uncovered, providing no opportunity for correction by erasure. What is laid down in paint is the visible manifestation of my process, the trace of the event of painting in its unaltered state. Thus it is obvious that in constructing the painting a new memory is being formed and simultaneously recorded, occupying not an ideal space, but rather the real space of the picture.

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