

BRITAIN
TATE

**PAINTING
NOW** five contemporary
artists

Tomma Abts
Gillian Carnegie
Simon Ling
Lucy McKenzie
Catherine Story

Exhibition curated by
Lizzie Carey-Thomas, Clarrie Wallis
and **Andrew Wilson**
Assisted by **Melissa Blanchflower**

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This guide and the exhibition texts are available in large print

Cover:
Gillian Carnegie *Prince 2011 – 12*
Oil paint on canvas
Margot and George Greig
Photo: Lothar Schnepf, courtesy
Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne

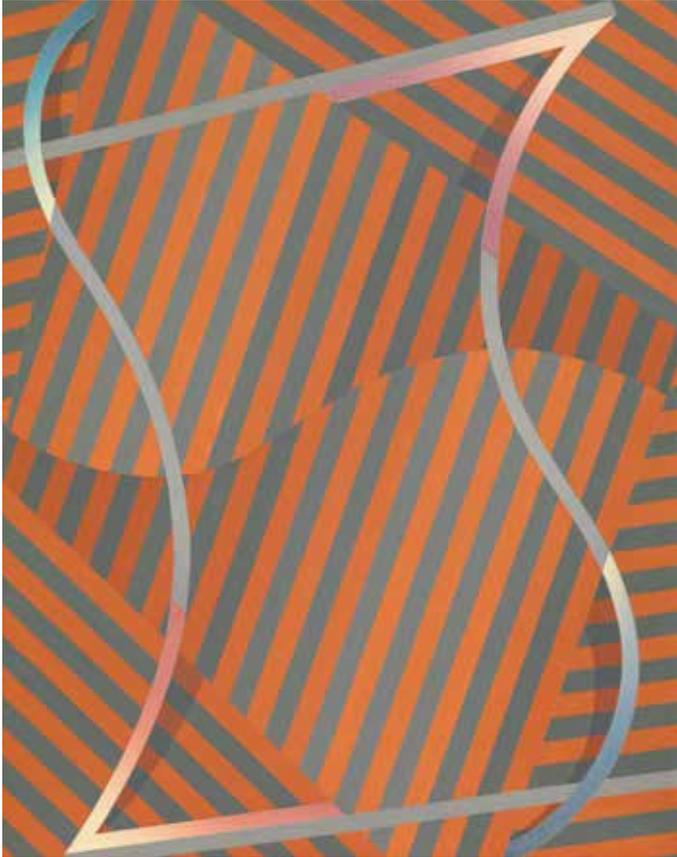
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Painting Now: Five Contemporary Artists

The artists in *Painting Now: Five Contemporary Artists* – Tomma Abts, Gillian Carnegie, Simon Ling, Lucy McKenzie and Catherine Story – have each developed distinctive approaches to painting. Their works' critical potential emerges not just from traditional qualities of observation and subjective expression, but also from different explorations of the physicality of painting itself often realised through a deliberate construction of image.

This exhibition does not attempt to identify a new movement, tendency or group of artists. Nor is it an overarching survey. However, subtle overlaps and affinities that can be drawn out of the varied work of these five artists start to offer a range of answers to the proposition of what painting might mean now, especially at a time when specific properties of painting are shared across artforms.

Tomma Abts



Tomma Abts creates a concentrated language of material, form, space and volume through her paintings. For her the act of painting is 'a concrete experience anchored in the material I am handling'. Neither abstract nor figurative, her paintings oscillate between an attention to how they are made and the work that results. Each painting is achieved through a cumulative sequence of intuitive yet complex decisions guided by the internal logic of each composition that is initiated from the first mark. The finished picture does not necessarily display the layers of mark-making, but the sense of the painting as wrought object is clear to see. The contrast between physical resolution or compositional inevitability and a difficulty of positioning each painting with reference to anything else lends them their power.

Tomma Abts born 1967

Zebe 2010

Acrylic paint and oil paint on canvas

Tate. Presented by Tate Members 2011

© Tomma Abts

Simon Ling



Simon Ling makes landscape paintings in the open air directly in front of his motif where his subject matter is found in nondescript urban or rural landscapes. He also constructs tableaux, which he then paints in his studio as a form of still life composition. While these studio constructions are wholly artificial, his landscape paintings depict places that might seem mundane or banal, where categories of artifice and nature shift – London Zoo, scrubland, or most recently the buildings around Old Street in London. By painting streetscape images Ling is not undertaking a project of straightforwardly observing and recording the shops and office buildings, but instead follows an approach to painting for which perception is central. For Ling, looking is not a process of passive observation but always an involving and unique act. The act of painting being an event about time and emotional connection and response – between him, the material of paint, the motif and what results as a painting.

Simon Ling born 1968

Untitled 2012

Oil paint on canvas

Courtesy greengrassi, London

© Simon Ling

Photo: Marcus Leith. Courtesy greengrassi, London

Lucy McKenzie



Lucy McKenzie's work in this room includes a group of *trompe l'œil* still life paintings of arrangements of documents on pin boards given the title *Quodlibet* (loosely translated as 'As It Falls') and a painted architectural structure that is a model of the marble cladding of the central living room of the Villa Müller in Prague, designed by the Austrian architect Adolf Loos (1870–1933). For McKenzie painting is a tool, or a means to an end. She deploys craft skills – marbling, engineering drawing or *trompe l'œil*, for instance – not simply for decorative or aestheticised reasons, but to communicate particular meaning and imbue it with critical purpose. In this respect, craft techniques and interior design succeed on the one hand simply as decoration, but are at base socially and politically directed in terms of the degree to which they exemplify ideals about designs for living. It is not surprising that for McKenzie, painting sits alongside fashion design, performance and curating; she finds ways to repurpose the critical weight painting can bear through her engagement with each of these collaborative activities.

Lucy McKenzie born 1977
Quodlibet XXII (Nazism) 2012

Oil paint on canvas
Private Collection, Belgium

© Lucy McKenzie

Photo: courtesy Galerie Micheline Szwajcer, Antwerp



Catherine Story

The subject of Catherine Story's paintings can be located in the strangeness of looking at things and what happens when this is translated through painting. This process entails a shift in register between material and dimensions and can be played out equally through sculpture and painting, which often exist alongside each other with no stated hierarchy of process. Questions of materiality and dimensionality also ground her long-held interest in both cinema and cubism. This, however, is not just a matter of subject or motif but more profoundly a concern with the circulation and transference of images through different ways of seeing – for instance, from the film set to the screen via celluloid. Film conjures up illusory worlds in which dancing patterns of light are made actual and real on the screen. Painting a vintage movie camera as if it is both cubist still life and personage, for example, animates complex histories of looking and feeling that transform how the work is understood; whereas picturing the lattice structure of a pylon as a solid form and making the painting on baking paper projects an image that is familiar and solid, yet difficult to place and ultimately fragile.

Catherine Story born 1968

Lowland (I) 2012

Oil paint and sand on wood

Courtesy the artist and Carl Freedman Gallery, London

© Catherine Story

Photo: Andy Keate. Courtesy Carl Freedman Gallery, London

Gillian Carnegie



Gillian Carnegie exploits the conventions and genres of academic figurative painting. Working within the traditional categories of landscape and still-life alongside paintings of interiors she investigates the materiality of painting and questions habitual responses to established subject matters. Her sense of controlled realism describes a push and pull between the painterly (material and process) and the pictorial as a deliberate construction of image. Carnegie's paintings close down narrative content, and her repetition of a stock of motifs effectively acts as a barrier to declared meaning. The making of a painted representation is emphasised as a thing in itself, rather than just a depiction of the chosen motif. As she has said: 'I prefer to consider the painting as a thing in the world rather than the painting as a picture of things in the world.' For Carnegie, the nature of the medium of paint, and her manipulation of it, is to create images that stand for themselves – not as self-contained statements – but within, connected to and part of the world.

Gillian Carnegie born 1971

Section 2012

Oil paint on board

The artist, courtesy Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne

© Gillian Carnegie

Photo: Lothar Schnepf. Courtesy Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne

Information

Painting Now:

Five Contemporary Artists

12 November 2013 – 9 February 2014

Opening hours

10.00–18.00 daily

Photography and mobile phones are not allowed in the exhibition

Events

Symposium:

Contemporary Painting in Context

Friday 13 December, 8.30–17.30

8.30–10.00 Tate Britain,

view the exhibition

11.00–17.30 The Paul Mellon Centre

for Studies in British Art, 16 Bedford

Square, papers and discussion

£20 (£10 concessions)

Email info@paul-mellon-centre.ac.uk

or call **020 7580 0311** for information

and to book.

Painting Now Curator's Talk

Exhibition curator **Clarrie Wallis**

gives a tour of the exhibition

Monday 20 January, 18.30–20.00

In the exhibition

£20 (£15 concessions)

Visit tate.org.uk or call

020 7887 8888 for information

and to book.

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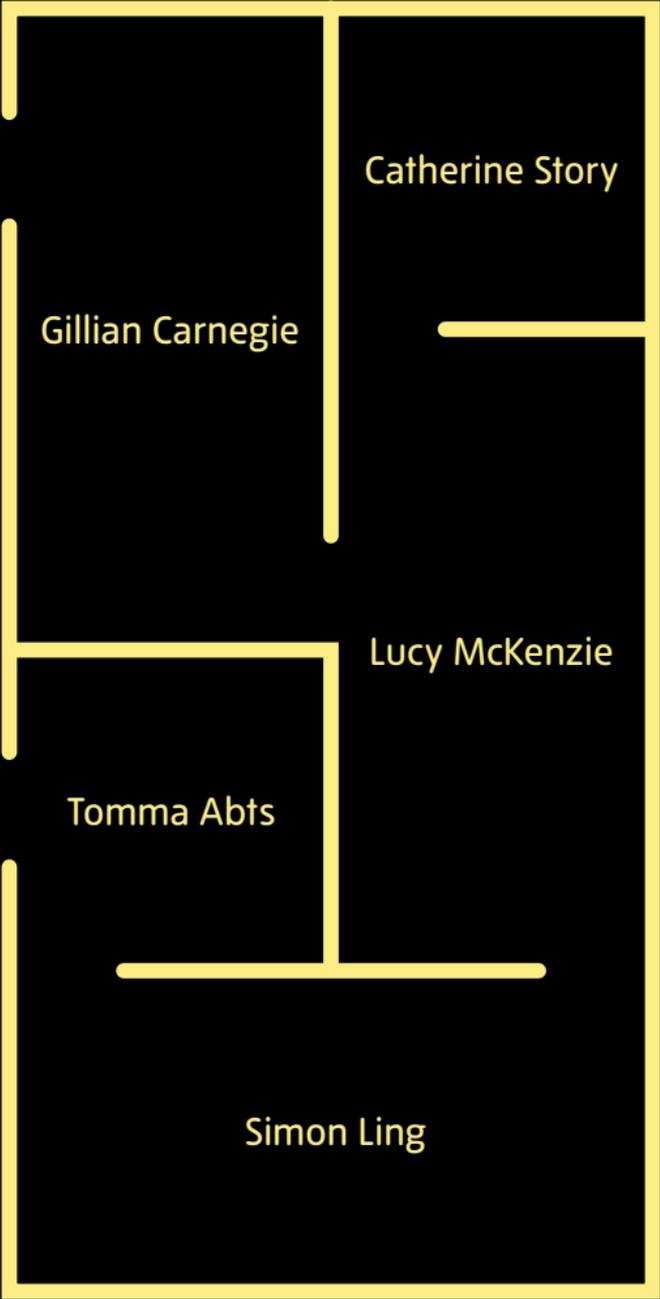
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