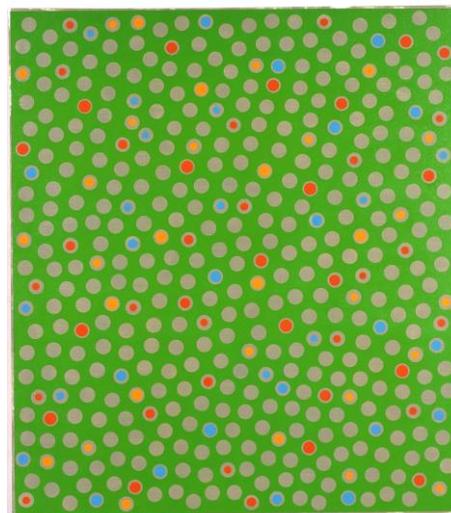


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PRESS RELEASE



JON THOMPSON PAINTINGS

15 MARCH – 17 APRIL 2005

Over the years I have come to believe that painting offers the highest order of aesthetic experience, an intimation of 'oneness' or singularity. When a painting really works, it has answered the oldest of metaphysical conundrums by becoming more than the sum of its parts. This is something that sculpture can't do and most post-conceptual work actively avoids, preferring linguistically attenuated as opposed to visual ways of structuring. St Augustine believed that human awareness of temporality was positive proof of this debased condition. This idea interests me enormously and it squares very well with my understanding of the work of painters I have always liked most; figures like Bronzino, Pontormo, Chardin, Cezanne, Monet and Morandi. All of them have made works which have a quality of miracle about them; works which appear new-born every time you see them. I like the suggestion of Plotinus that only the sense of the actual becoming of a sign has a meaning and that once the sign's meaning is fixed – has become routine – it is already wasted. This seems to me to be an admirable lesson for the painter.

Jon Thompson, 2005

This is the first London exhibition of Jon Thompson's work since 1997 and his first exhibition entirely devoted to painting since 1967. In recent years his work has focussed on the photographic image, black-and-white, large-scale, sculptural and with a strong performative element. (A particularly fine diptych was acquired by Tate in 1998).

These new paintings offer a 'sensational' experience, in every meaning of the word: they command attention, they appeal directly to the sensory cortex; they are a stunning performance. But they also indicate an acute awareness of history, of philosophy, of phrase and fable. As Thompson says above, a truly successful painting offers an experience of something it contains over and above and perhaps despite itself. In one painting Thompson might delve into his experience of a Monet to paint his own poppy field from its sensory highlights: the colour, the light, the depth of field organised into a visual notation where the melody rises and falls against the orchestration of the image. Debussy arranged by Bach. In another, painted fossils and rocks or broken bread float in atomised fields of colour, five loaves to feed the five thousand, flint tools to carve out a civilisation. Parables for the senses.

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