

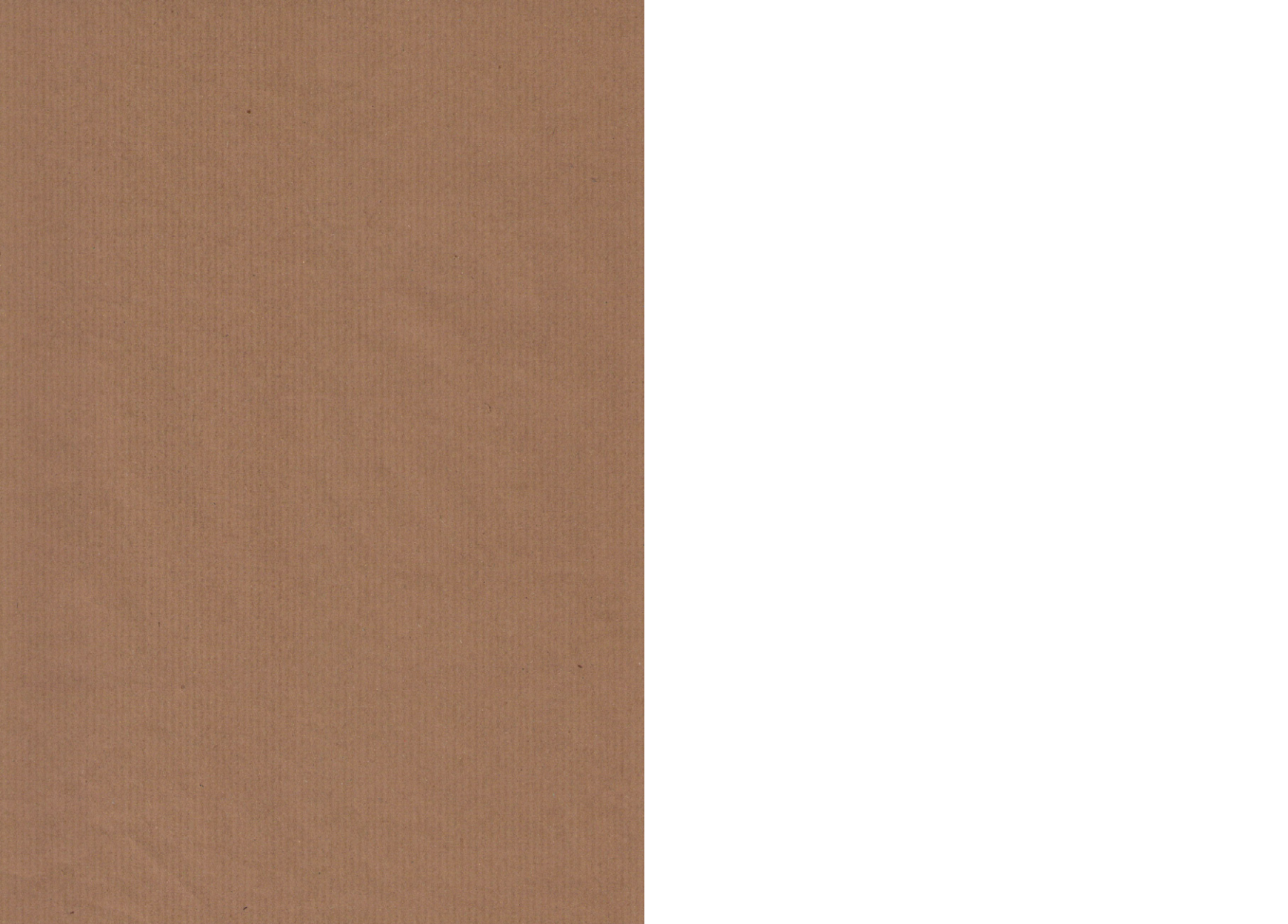


HELEN A.
PRITCHARD



MOTHS,
DRONES &
DRAINPIPES







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The Kitchen Sink Abstractions of Helen A. Pritchard

Imagine taking a Kurt Schwitters collage and pulling it through steel rollers used to torque a hefty Richard Serra sculpture. Once all the allusions to anything representational from 3D objects to text or recognizable imagery has been squished into neutrality or at least flatness, you are left with what would resemble a Helen Pritchard painting. The intimate scale of previous works has been abandoned in favor of a larger format, which rather than giving the shapes more room to spread out and breathe—like chickens in a new coop—the forms are now more congested and huddled together with a nervous, restless energy.

They call to mind the paintings of noted German abstractionist Albert Oehlen, though with much less ceremony and affectation. The works of Pritchard are explorations, seemingly unsure of where they're going, but content with the journey they are on into color and process. The blocks of pigment appear random but also describe a nonconcrete, narrative storyline somehow objectively decipherable. In other words, they are familiar but foreign, reminiscent of another era yet undoubtedly contemporary.

It is the tendency of the mind's eye to seek out what is known; we experience just that when viewing Helen Pritchard's work, but it is as much a leap of faith and relinquishment of our preconceived notions of both figurative and abstract art, to see and appreciate them in their full. There is an 'everything but the kitchen sink' aesthetic to Pritchard's canvases: after stirring in the cauldron of her intelligence they push and pull from top to bottom, side to side, and we are left with a rich and seductive space in which to inhabit and play.

Kenny Schachter



A Fête of Things Familiar

oil, collage, enamel, pastels on canvas/board
55 x 43 inches



Still Life on all fours with Protea and Book of Psalms
 oil, collage, enamel, pastels on canvas/board
 55 x 43 inches



Still Life: An Oyster, Punch and Aspidistra
 oil, collage, enamel, pastels on canvas/board
 55 x 43 inches



Bust of an African Queen and more Birds
 oil, collage, enamel, pastels on canvas/board
 55 x 43 inches



The San to Meet the Modernists
 oil, collage, enamel, pastels on canvas/board
 55 x 43 inches



Smoker's Still Life 2010
glass shelf & light



Smoker's Still Life 2010
glass shelf & light

The work of Helen A. Pritchard has an inherently heterogeneous quality: from the formal choices of palette to the process and genre, making the very act of painting both the subject and the medium.

Her paintings are both intelligible and cryptic, abstract and figurative: their apparent irreverence and spontaneous gestures belying a lengthy period of gestation guided by intuition. This process of constructing and deconstructing layers by revision reveals the core motive in Pritchard's paintings.

Pritchard's first solo-show at Rove Gallery, ***Moths, Drones & Drainpipes***, features works which play with aesthetic conventions and established genres of painting. The painted canvases are seen attached to a canvas board, evincing a page-like quality, where registration marks reveal the history of the painting.

Made over the course of a year, the featured works use a variety of materials such as damar resin, pigment, oil paint, spray, charcoal, enamel, and collage. Each layer of paint is documented by a series of accompanying photographs, diagrams and written work presented as contingent parts of the process to Pritchard's formal decision-making.

Pritchard's irreverence in the painted gesture is a deliberate aesthetic choice resultant from the indifference of vernacular language in our global, homogenised time.

The featured works question the aesthetics of variant cultures. The inherent symbolism of form, be they proteas, bones, guns, punches, hair, or detritus they have the ready made restlessness feel of rhopography. Set in still life landscapes, these genre paintings help to elucidate the paintings' objective: namely, to establish a taste of the ordinary, and of things under-represented.

The ephemeral quality to Pritchard's works evince both their fleeting temperament and reference to a variety of artistic styles. Often allegorical, they look to art history and the origins of painting; from cave paintings in Southern Africa, to Seventeenth Century Flemish genre painters and landscape painters like Pierneef (1886), and finally to Modernism.

This hybridised language is metaphoric in its problematisation of pre-established ideas of aesthetics within society, furthermore presenting the painting as the platform on which to be represented.







