

DELLASPOSA

FINE ART



IN PURSUIT OF THINGS PAST

DARREN COFFIELD + ISABELLA WATLING



10 APRIL -
6 MAY, 2017

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10 SHEPHERD STREET, LONDON, W1J 7JE

Dellaspota is proud to present a new exhibition of still-life paintings by the provocative contemporary artist, Darren Coffield, alongside portraits by the rising portrait painter, Isabella Watling.

In Pursuit of Things Past offers a Proustian meditation on time, memory, and the aesthetic impulse. The exhibition is open to the public from Monday 10th April to Saturday 6th May 2017 at 10 Shepherd Street, London, W1J 7JE.

Unveiling a new series of paintings by Darren Coffield, the artist uses as his motif still-life paintings after the 18th century French artist, Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin (1699-1779). Considered the master of still-life, Chardin's paintings were so influential to the French writer Marcel Proust that the novelist expounded upon the beauty of everyday objects as inspiring moments of revelation in his ekphrasis essay, 'Chardin and Rembrandt', written in 1895. The ordinary can be extraordinary, if only one is able pause and see it as extraordinary. Here, the artist imbues the everyday world with new meaning through his unique observation of the world around him.

Darren Coffield draws parallels with Proust's rumination on time past and time present by examining how we see and perceive the world around us. Coffield's still-life compositions are painted and then reassembled as a jigsaw, subverting the viewer's expectations by piecing his still-life paintings together with its own constituent elements now distorted through the lens of memory and relational perspective. These encrypted images raise fundamental issues regarding the veracity of reality to appearance, consumption and corruption, knowledge and memory.

Coffield's early Proustian portraits are also featured in the exhibition. Here, one can see the artist's provocation with Old Master paintings. Taking the Bellini's Madonna of the Meadow, he obscures the subject's visage with pixelated abstraction, while disrupting the iconographic status of the painting with an irreverent day-glow halo and every man walking his dog appears in the background. These early works see the artist's fascination with portraiture; capturing the vanity of figures now unknown in memorial. The unknown and forgotten identity of figures left hanging in the museum, like Velázquez's Prince Baltasar Carlos in Silver and Lady with a Fan, are now rendered and subsumed into the work of art itself.

Alongside Coffield's portraits are recent works by the young apprentice to Velázquez and Titian, Isabella Watling. Trained at the Charles H. Cecil studio in Florence – the oldest artist atelier in Europe, where da Vinci is known to visit – Watling practices the sight-size technique of painting. She continues to paint from life, following in the footsteps of the Old Masters, by considered observation of her subjects; a vision in unison with memory, which expresses the greater reality of light, colour, and form. Here, the visual language of art evolves from the past to the present through silence and slow time - exhibiting to us a vision more complete, more seizing, more probing than reality itself.

We look forward to welcoming you to the exhibition and invite you to enjoy the sight of these paintings, on view for a limited time, in the heart of Mayfair, London.



DARREN COFFIELD



Darren Coffield was born in London in 1969. He studied at Goldsmiths College, Camberwell School of Art and the Slade School of Art in London where he received his Bachelor of Fine Art in 1993. He has exhibited widely in the company of many leading artists including Damien Hirst, Howard Hodgkin, Patrick Caulfield and Gilbert and George at venues ranging from the Courtauld Institute, Somerset House to Voloshin Museum, Crimea.

His work can be found in collections around the world. In 2003 his controversial portrait of Ivan Massow, former chairman of the ICA in full fox hunting costume was exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery in London. Portraits of George Galloway and Molly Parkin (NPG, 2010) followed, and most recently a depiction of former Miners Union leader Arthur Scargill made entirely from coal dust. In the early nineties Coffield worked with

Joshua Compston on the formation of Factual Nonsense - the centre of the emerging Young British Artists scene. A new book by Coffield about this period in British Art, *Factual Nonsense: The Art and death of Joshua Compston* is out now published by Troubador.

Described by the Art Critic and author of *Interviews with Francis Bacon*, David Sylvester as, "Another of those magicians who (probably without knowing) know how to imbue pieces of matter with light". Coffield's enigmatic variations on traditional still-life and portraiture beautifully illustrate the instability, and show the diversity of pictorial codes available to the contemporary artist once the Renaissance tradition of a fixed perspective space is abandoned. The viewer is insistently reminded that pictures of objects are systems of thought about objects.



Darren Coffield, *Dead Game III (After Chardin)*, 2015
Acrylic on laser cut panel, 65 x 86 x 7 cm

£7,000.00



Darren Coffield, *Dead Game II (After Chardin)*, 2015
Acrylic on die cut board, 60 x 80 cm

£7,000.00



Darren Coffield, *Still Life II (After Chardin)*, 2016
Acrylic on laser cut panel, 65 x 86 x 7 cm

£7,000.00



Darren Coffield, *Encrypted Still Life (After Chardin)*, 2016
Acrylic on laser cut panel, 65 x 86 x 7 cm

£7,000.00

NOTES TOWARDS PAINTING IN THE DIGITAL AGE

Painting has now become completely a game by which man distracts himself. What is fascinating is its going to become much more difficult for the artist because he must deepen the game, to be any good at all, and return the onlooker to life more violently. - Francis Bacon

Within the first two decades of the 21st Century painters have retreated in the face of the digital age into a form of mimicry as eschewed by photorealism or capitulation through abstraction whilst the media thrives on using the human form to manipulate, market and disseminate globally. Instead of retreating in the face of the digital age many of my artworks evolve from painstaking and logical pursuits to non-predetermined ends, becoming paradoxical puzzles playing with perception.

In this new series of paintings the images are first painted then broken up and dispersed in to one another. All the information is contained in the painting but not necessarily displayed in the expected cognitive order. The information is consumed and resolved; creating a new form that can either be read in terms of creation, consumption or corruption. It provides a basis for approaching difficult questions such as the relation of knowledge to perception, and 'reality' to

appearance. With this process the final artwork is cannibalised, made by the painting 'feeding' off itself, as I believe nothing can be more abstract than what we actually see.

In the digital age of mass communication and instant gratification the ideal of the home as a sanctuary and personal space has been eroded. In this context, the humble still-life painter appears to be an anachronism. The painter represents the notion of truth inevitably associated with solitude and contemplation which positions them at the furthest pole from technologies constant 'live feeds': the silent meditation in a slow medium on still things.

The still life lends itself peculiarly well to exercises in verisimilitude, and attendant visual tricks and puzzles. The history of *trompe-l'oeil* painting is principally associated with still, small things easily simulated in two dimensions. The first popular anecdote of the still life is Pliny's account, in the fourth century BC, of how Zexis painted grapes so realistically that birds were fooled in to pecking at them. The fact that still life and domestic themes figure so predominantly in the pioneering work of some of the greatest of the early modernists is evidence of their detachment from the values of public institutions and the marketplace.

- Darren Coffield



Darren Coffield, *The Madonna of the Meadow (After Bellini)*, 1997
Acrylic on silk, 84 x 99 cm

£8,000.00



Darren Coffield, *Melancholia of the Obscure Historical Figure*, 1997
Acrylic on silk, 58 x 52 cm

£3,500.00



Darren Coffield, *Madonna and Child*, 1997
Acrylic on silk, 53 x49 cm

£3,500.00



Darren Coffield, *Lady with a Fan (After Velazquez)*, 1997
Acrylic on silk, 50 x 44 cm

£3,000.00



ISABELLA WATLING



Isabella Watling was born in London in 1990, and spent her formative years in the UK and Australia. From the age of 18 she trained at the Charles H Cecil studios in Florence where she returns periodically to teach portrait and figure painting. The objective of the formal training is to remove any technical deficiencies between the artist's honest perception of their subject and the finished picture.

After living in Italy for six years, she moved to London in 2015 to set up her own studio in Kensington, painting portrait commissions from life. Owing to her thorough training in the Venetian methods, her work is related to and inspired by artists like Velazquez, Van Dyck and Rembrandt.

Watling's principal focus for her portraits is to capture something of the character and life of the sitter. For her, each portrait is a concentrated response to her impression of the person she paints. In working from life in close collaboration with the sitter, the picture becomes a living artefact of her experiences of the model during the time spent in the studio.

In using the same methods and materials as the great portrait artists of history - dating from Titian in 17th century Venice, Watling hopes to give her work a force of integrity that comes through a feeling of timelessness.

Watling's portraits are regularly exhibited publicly, including the National Portrait Gallery in 2012 and 2014 respectively, where she has also lectured and held a portrait painting workshop. Isabella has undertaken a number of private and public commissions. Commissioned by Pembroke College Cambridge, she painted the world renowned clarinetist, Emma Johnson, and is currently working on a group portrait of the five lady judges of the Court of Appeal to hang in the Inner Temple. Most recently, Isabella Watling was named among the Top Portrait Painters of 2016 by the Royal Society of Portrait Painters in London. A love of beautiful naturalistic oil painting and its potential for reflecting something of the wonder of being an individual is for Isabella a great challenge and a life's endeavour.



Isabella Watling, *Florence*, 2016
Oil on canvas, 100 × 70 cm

£9,750.00



Isabella Watling, *Nude*, 2013
Oil on canvas, 90 x 50 cm

£3,000.00

INTERVIEW WITH ISABELLA WATLING*

Have you always worked with oil paint?

I started using oils properly in the second year of my time at Charles H. Cecil Studios in Florence, where I trained for four years and stayed another two years to teach. A year of drawing from casts and the life model in charcoal is required before anyone can pick up a paint brush.

What effect did the course have on your artwork and process?

When I arrived at Charles H. Cecil Studios I was 18 and a blank canvas. I hadn't been taught any methods of painting so I relished using the sight-size method [used by masters since the 17th-century]. I still paint portraits using this.

Tell us a bit about sight-size portraiture and why this appeals to you...

I paint under high natural light and do all my looking from a distance of about five metres. Sight-size is a method whereby the image and subject are placed alongside each other and viewed or compared at a distance so as to see a unified image to the scale and proportion of life. So one is constantly walking back and forward.

When it is properly understood it is not just a measuring technique but a philosophy of seeing. You are forced to see from a distance and convey the visual effect. This allows you to concentrate on the elements that best characterise your sitter and lead the viewers eye around the canvas to create a particular idea or atmosphere.

Why do you prefer to work from life?

You are able to improvise more and follow inspired suggestions by nature. Perhaps one day you see a more harmonious

series of folds in a coat. Your subject is always subtly changing, as is the light. If you paint from life you are given constant variations on a theme and it's exciting to choose the ones that you feel most characterise your sitter.

For me each portrait is a concentrated response to my impression of the person I paint. In working from life in close collaboration with the sitter, the picture becomes a living artefact of my experiences of the model during the time spent in the studio.

How do you set up a portrait scene?

I paint in my studio, the sitter either sits on a chair on a box so as to be at my eye level or stands. I don't think about the scene too much before the model takes a seat. I take time to look at the model from various angles and in different poses. I like people to look natural in my paintings, the best poses are usually when people are sitting or standing how they naturally sit or stand.

How do you approach the clothes?

I think a lot about the colour of the clothes and background in relation to the colouring of the sitter. I would like to start experimenting with different backgrounds, setting people in a room with objects etc. I will often do the clothes from a manikin, so I can take as much care over them as I do the face.

What surface do you like to work on?

I paint on a neutral bone-coloured ground, oil-primed linen. I use primed canvas and I am currently trying to prime my own canvases. I like a fairly smooth surface with a bit of tooth to the primer.

What tools would we find in your studio?

I use a mixture of hog- and sable-haired brushes, varying in size from very big for backgrounds to 000 for highlights. I make my medium, which is a mixture of Canada balsam, turpentine, mastic varnish, and sun-thickened linseed oil.

What top technique tips can you share with readers?

When I'm doing small highlights, such as in the eyes, I mix in a bit of walnut oil in the lead white and holding it at the end, apply with a tiny brush. Often I will have to redo these highlights a few

*Interview with Isabella Watling by Natalie Milner. This article originally appeared in *Artists and Illustrators* magazine (London: Chelsea Magazines Ltd., 2016-17)

times to get it right, but by doing this you can create a dither in the mark, giving it a real spark of life.

I also use a mirror all the time. I hold it up to my left eye, which is my prominent eye, and observe the subject and canvas at the same time, which in turn is reversed. It's like seeing your painting with a fresh pair of eyes – all the mistakes jump out.

Describe your studio...

It has a high north-facing window [the most steady light, with no direct sunlight] which is slanted at about 30 degrees. The height of the window is important for my portraits as I black out the bottom half in order to make a small aperture of light which

falls on the face to create shadows which give form. I have a pulley system so I can control how much light comes in. The walls and ceiling are painted a neutral, warm grey which helps to control reflected light.

Who are you most influenced by?

I am always studying and looking to the Old Masters. I especially love Velázquez, Van Dyck and Titian.

What is the best advice you have ever received?

“Stand back.” – Charles Cecil



Isabella Watling, *Waiting for Godot*, 2010
Oil on canvas, 240 x 150 cm

Price on request.



Isabella Watling, *Ana*, 2013
Oil on canvas, 65 x 55 cm

£5,000.00



Isabella Watling, *Amore*, 2013
Oil on canvas, 96 x 55 cm

£4,000.00



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**FOUNDED ON THE BELIEF THAT ART IS
INSPIRING, AND ENGAGING TO ALL.**

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Dellasposa is a unique gallery founded on the principle that art inspires and engages all. We specialise in curated exhibitions, commissions, art advisory services.

Whether you are invested in the art scene or beginning your journey, we create exclusive relationships by connecting you with artists and the story of art.

We offer independent, in-depth expertise to guide you through collecting art in today's international,

and often complex art market. With scholarship at the heart of our work, we are guided by each individual collector to understand their own aesthetic interests and objectives.

We curate satellite art exhibitions and events, presenting established and rising artists united by their conceptual rigour and ambitious, timeless works of art.

Art is a discovery and inspiration. We bring the world of art to you.





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10 APRIL - 6 MAY, 2017

10 SHEPHERD STREET, LONDON, W1J 7JE

MONDAY - FRIDAY

10:00 - 18:00

SATURDAY - SUNDAY

13:00 - 16:00

BY APPOINTMENT



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