

Richard Wright

Exhibition Information

Exhibition Events

Thursday 6 May 6.30
pm, Galleries

Leading art critic and lecturer
Michael Archer talks about the
historical, pictorial references of
Richard Wright's exhibition.

Thursday 27 May 6.30
pm, Meeting Room

Richard Wright talks about the
range of images that have
interested and inspired him through
the making of his new work for the
exhibition.

Both talks are **free**, but please book
as places are limited.

Dundee Contemporary Arts

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Richard Wright has gained increasing attention and acclaim over the past ten years for his remarkable wall paintings. He conceives and makes these *in situ*, responding to the buildings in which he exhibits. In a time-consuming process during the weeks prior to the exhibition opening, gouache paint is applied directly to the wall. The paintings become a unique and dynamic fusion of the permanent structure of the building and the fleeting nature of the painting. For the paintings last only as long as the exhibition – in this case 51 days – before the walls are returned to their normal white.

'I put myself in a position where I have to improvise. In a similar way to a jazz musician, I am working with the attractions (themes, if you like) that I'm interested in at a particular time. I like to put myself on the edge of the work where the pre-existing situation and this range of attractions combine to make the show.'

Richard Wright, 1998

24 April –
13 June 2004

There are several such works in this exhibition, which is the largest Richard Wright has made to date in the UK, along with a number of new works on

paper. These include both small framed drawings, made in late 2003, and larger paintings, all of which were made in the months leading up to the exhibition. All works have no title.

In the first gallery, there are two of Wright's new works on paper, both of which are extremely fragile, with very delicate surfaces. **Please do not touch the paintings.** The first is painted using black enamel, the second – with the wood-effect background – with oil paint.

Wright's paintings on paper are a very recent development in his practice, but strive to retain the something of the quality of his wall paintings – being unframed and unglazed they seem to be part of the wall. They are quite insubstantial and extremely flat. They are emphatically two-dimensional, yet each creates the strong illusion of three – of objects in space. The black painting (like the third such work, which is in the large gallery) uses a method that might recall grainy newspaper photographs or digital images, whereby the image is 'pixelated,' broken down into equally-sized units, with varying amounts of colour. This manner of producing the image contrasts with the clearly 'hand-done' quality of the paint.

The small framed drawing also in this gallery uses gouache and tempera,

which give two distinct effects and qualities of colour. Like the other drawings in the exhibition, much of the visual interest lies in its creation of an impression of space, and in this piece movement, through the application of marks on paper.

In the larger gallery, the third work on paper and a further drawing can be found, along with a vast wall painting, one of four in the exhibition. It is for such remarkable wall paintings that Wright is best known. These works seem to pull the whole building into the realm of the painting. They draw on architectural features and fittings, highlighting often-unnoticed characteristics in the rooms for which they are made. In doing this, Wright seeks to emphasise the physical nature of being with painting and what happens when we look. They involve the viewer in the space of the painting and seem to affect the area around them as much as the walls they occupy.

The new paintings at DCA can be seen to relate directly to the strong, straight lines of the building and its particular patterns and quality of light. Wright has used many optical effects, combinations of colour and line, to create the illusion of objects in space.

His paintings are often impossible to see from one viewpoint, and need to be

seen from several positions. You are drawn to move around the room. In the small room at the far end of the gallery, one of the wall paintings in fact surrounds you and stretches out of the room into the main gallery.

'When you enter a room housing one of his works, for a split second it seems empty. Then you might notice a small patch of coloured pattern near the floor, or running up one edge of a corner. Occasionally you won't see it until you've turned around to leave. Reminiscent of sculpture or, perhaps more accurately, modest pieces of furniture or personal belongings, they occupy the room in a completely original way.'

Alex Farquharson in *frieze*, 2001

Exploring the surfaces of these paintings, the time and energy that has gone into their making can be guessed at. The finest of brush strokes, made by hand, can seem to charge the whole space. Wright hopes that such works might seem like they have always been there, that he has revealed something that was somehow already present.

All his works share an extensive awareness of the history of image-making, with a broad range of

references, from early twentieth century painters such as Kandinsky, Klee or Braque, to more contemporary imagery from other media. The final drawing in the other small room at the far end of the large gallery shares much with the other works in its illusion of three-dimensionality, but seems familiar, an example of a kind of fantasy architecture to be found in any one of a number of sources.

Richard Wright (b.1960) lives and works in Glasgow. He has taken part in many group shows internationally, including *Drawing Now: Eight Propositions* at the Museum of Modern Art, New York (2002), and important surveys such as *Manifesta 2* in Luxembourg (1998) *The British Art Show 5* and *Intelligence: New British Art* at Tate Britain (both 2000). In recent years he has had solo exhibitions at Tate Liverpool, Kunsthalle Bern and Kunstverein Düsseldorf.

To find out more about Richard Wright, please visit the Information Room or talk to a Gallery Assistant who will be happy to answer any questions you may have about the exhibition.