



AMIKAM TOREN

Neither A Teapot Nor A Painting

11th January - 22nd February 2014

Amikam Toren | Neither A Teapot Nor A Painting

11 January - 22 February 2014

MOTINTERNATIONAL Brussels is delighted to announce the first solo exhibition of Amikam Toren in Belgium.

The gallery exhibits key works from the artist's practice, including the seminal *Neither a Teapot Nor a Painting*. Deliberately echoing René Magritte's famous play on the paradoxes of imagery, "*This Is Not a Pipe*" (1929), the artist produced a painting of the titular teapot using its ground fragments as pigment. Displaying both the destroyed object and the painting side by side, the work is the first instance of the artist's 'tautological' paintings, and represents a pivotal moment in his practice. The exhibition focuses on how Toren continues to work with materials from destroyed ready-made objects which are resurrected as artworks, with a selection of paintings from his *Reproductions* series, and an example of the *Stack* sculptures.

A significant figure of British conceptual painting, Toren has been the subject of major solo exhibitions at The Serpentine Gallery, 1976, The Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1979, Chisenhale Gallery and Arnolfini, Bristol, 1991. Internationally, his work has been represented at the Paris Biennale, 1967, Venice Biennale, 1984, and Guangzhou Triennial, 2012, with recent exhibitions including the John Moores Painting Prize, 2012, Jerwood Drawing Prize, London, 2011, Neuberger Museum of Art, New York, 2009 and Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2008.

MOTINTERNATIONAL represents Amikam Toren in Brussels.

Amikam Toren was born 1945 in Israel. He lives and works in London.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2014

Neither A Teapot Nor A Painting, MOTInternational, Brussels, Belgium

2013

Carrots, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, UK (forthcoming)

Of The Times and Other Historic Works, Jessica Silverman Gallery, San Francisco

2012

Moving in the Right Direction, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

2009

Amikam Toren – Carrots & Refreshments, Noga Gallery, Tel Aviv

2008

Carrots, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

2006

Narrative painting #1, A61, Köln

Ten Last Drawings, The Room, London

Received Wisdom, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

2005

Mythomania, The Metropole Galleries Folkstone, Kent

Plan B, Noga Gallery, Tel Aviv

Amikam Toren, John Frankland, Matt's Gallery, London

2004

Picnic, t1 +2artspace, London

Clouds in Trousers, ARTLAB 29 at Imperial College, London

2003

Golem, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

2002

Bluebeard, Jeffrey Charles Gallery, London

1999

Bluebeard, Minerva-Bar Gallery, Tel Aviv

Galerie Gabrielle Maubrie, Paris

1998

Armchair Paintings 1989-1998, Minerva-Bar Gallery, Tel Aviv

1997

Hand in Glove, Galerie Gabrielle Maubrie, Paris

1996

Three Takes, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

1993

Textes, Gabrielle Maubrie, Paris

Galerie Carstens, Berlin

Harry Zellweger, Basel

1991

Harry Zellweger, Basel
Galerie Gabrielle Maubrie, Paris
Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London
Amikam Toren, Chisenhale Gallery, London
Amikam Toren, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol

1990

Amikam Toren, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (cat.)

1989

Safety Regulation Painting No,6, Victoria Miro, London
Rotterdam Kunststichting, Rotterdam
Stacks, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

1987

Pidgin Paintings, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London (cat., Patricia Bickers, ill.)

1985

Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London
Subverting...a temporary edition, Camerawork, London

1984

Actualities, Matt's Gallery, London (cat., David Coxhead, ill.)

1983

Neither a tree nor a picture, Galeria Akumulatory, Poznan
Representations, Lewis Johnstone Gallery, London

1982

Lewis Johnstone Gallery, London

1981

Bluff and double bluff, Matt's Gallery, London
Mirroring, Lewis Johnstone Gallery, London
If painting then..., Riverside Studios, London

1979

The Commercial Show, Barry Barker Ltd., London
Replacing, ICA, London (cat., Sarah Kent, ill.)

1977

Simple Fractions, House Gallery, London

1976

Serpentine Gallery, London

1975

Urban Landscape Exchange, GLAA, London

1973

Annely Juda Fine Art, London

1968

Goldberg Gallery, Edinburgh Festival

1967

Maserik Gallery, Tel Aviv

GROUP EXHIBITION

2013

Four Corners of the World, Hite Foundation, Seoul, Korea
Formal Alchemy, curated by Jessica Silverman, FUSED, San Francisco

2012

The 4th Guangzhou Triennial, Guangdong Museum of Art, China
The London Open, Whitechapel Gallery, London
Common Ground, Biennale Architettura 2012, Venice
Jerwood Drawing Prize 2012, Jerwood Space, London
Summer Exhibition, Royal Academy of Art, London
Summer Exhibition, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London
Homenagem, Museu do Acude, Rio de Janeiro
One and One and One, Cafe Gallery, London
Collaborators, Room, London

2011

Ill Fares The Land, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London
Jerwood Drawing Prize 2011, London
Everyday, Ruskin Gallery, Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge
Smokefall, Tintype, London
One Another, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London
Abstraction, NO:ID Gallery at The Room, London

2010

No New Thing Under the Sun, Royal Academy of Arts, London
Re-make/Re-mnodel, The National Glass Centre, Sunderland
Inside Outsider Language, Waterside Project Space, London
Face History, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London
The Way We Do Art Now, Selected by Pavel Büchler, Tanya Leighton Gallery, Berlin
Summer Exhibition, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

2009

Le chant de la carpe, Parc Saint Léger, Burgundy
Ecosfera, Artists' Village Ein Hod, Tel Aviv
5 Sculptures, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London
British Subjects 1948-2000, Neuberger Museum of Art, New York

2008

The Archer and the Goat, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London
Kate Atkin and Amikam Toren, Squid & Tabernacle, London
Intimacy, Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Victoria, Australia
Marc Camille Chaimowicz, de Appel, Amsterdam, traveling to PMMK in Oostende, Belgium
At Home, Voewood Projects, High Kelling, Norfolk
Building, Dwelling, Thinking, Group show curated by John Slyce, Laura Bartlett Gallery, London

2007

Museum of Contemporary Art, Dubrovnik
Still life, still, T 1+2 Gallery, London
Avatar of Sacred Discontent, T 1+2 Gallery, London
In the End was the Word, Matthew Bown Gallery, London
Chisenhale Biennale, London

2006

The Signing, Keith Talent Gallery, London (curator)
House in Motion, Fieldgate Gallery, London
Celeste Art Prize, Truman Brewery, London
If it didn't exist you'd have to invent it: a partial showroom history, The Showroom, London

Kapital, Kent Gallery, New York

2005

Mythomania, The Metropole Galleries Folkestone, Kent

Whatever Happened to Social Democracy, Rooseum Center for Contemporary Art, Malmö

2004

The Solar Anus, Henry Peacock Gallery, London

Bone Quake, 16 Upper Wimpole St, London

Painting, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

2003

ChockerFuckingBlocked, Jeffrey Charles, London

2002

Face Off: portrait of the artist, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge (cat.) and touring to Towner Art Gallery, Eastbourne

Fluent – paintings and words, Centenary Gallery, Camberwell College of Arts

Reality Revisited, Martin Kudlek, Cologne

Mostyn Open, Oriel Mostyn Gallery, Llandudno

Reflections, gf2, London (cat., ill.)

The Green Room, Percy Miller Gallery, London (curated by Simon Moretti)

A B See D, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

Live in Your Head, Museu do Chiado, Lisbon

Men at Home, Kalisher Gallery, Tel Aviv

Makeshift, University of Brighton (cat., ill.)

2000

Galway Arts Centre, Ireland

Amikam Toren/Ian Breakwell, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

Live in Your Head: Concept and Experiment in Britain, 1965-75, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London (cat., ill.)

British Art Show 5, Edinburgh and tour (cat., ill.)

1999

Artfocus, Jerusalem Biennale

British Artists, Galerie Krinzinger, Vienna

Porcupines/Arthinking 1999, 291 Gallery, London

John Moores Exhibition 21, Liverpool (Prize winner)

Furniture I, Richard Salmon, Studio 4, London

1998

Aalst paper biennale, Aalst

4 Schilders-4x solo-4 peintres, De Markten, Brussels

Context, Jewish Arabic Cultural Centre, Haifa (cat.)

A-Z (curator: Matthew Higgs), The Approach, London

Craft, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge (cat.)

1997

619 KBB 75, mobile, Paris and tour

Humanism 2020, Ein-Hod Sculpture Biennale, Israel

Irredeemable Skeletons, Shilam + Smith 3, London

L'empreinte, Musée National d'Art Moderne, Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris

1996

Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

The pleasure of aesthetic life, The Showroom, London (curator)

1995

Pretext: Heteronyms, Clink Street Studios, London

Cubitt Gallery (with Gavin Brown, Jemina Stehli, Paul Noble), London

1994

London Landscapes, Associazione Culturale Velan, Torino
Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London
Original Paintings, Institut Francais, London

1993

Portrait Now, National Portrait Gallery, London (cat., ill. text by Robin Gibson)
Spit in the Ocean, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London
Second Tyne International, Newcastle-upon-Tyne (cat., ill.)
Moving into View, Royal Festival Hall, London, and touring (cat.,)

1992

And What Do You Represent?, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London
With Attitude, Galerie Guy Ledune, Brussels
15/1, Melania Basarab, London
Surface Values, Kettle's Yard, Cambridge

1991

Kunstlandschaft Europa, Kunstverein Freiburg

1990

Counterpoint, Gimpel Fils, London

1989

John Moores Liverpool Exhibition 16, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (prize winner)
The Tree of Life, touring to Manchester, Penzance, Exeter, London, Sheffield, Bradford, Durhan, Eastbourne, Peterborough, Edinburgh, Ayr, Lincoln, Coventry (cat., ill.)
Anthony Reynolds Gallery (Dering Street), London
Evidence, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

1988

Fragments of False Houses, Pomeroy Purdy Gallery, London

1987

Instalment – 5 British Artists, Plan K, Brussels (cat., ill.)
On a Plate, Serpentine Gallery, London
John Moores Liverpool Exhibition 15, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (cat., ill. no 4)

1986

No Place Like Home, Cornerhouse, Manchester
Furniture Sculpture, Victoria Miro Gallery, London

1985

Masterpieces of the Avantgarde: Three Decades of Contemporary Art – The Seventies, Annely Juda Fine Art, London
New Art I, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

1984

Problems of Picturing, Serpentine Gallery, London (cat., Sarah Kent, ill.)
Aperto, Venice Biennale

1983

Photo(graphic) vision, Winchester Gallery, Winchester

1982

Lewis Johnstone Gallery, London
Un nuovo classicismo, Premio Lubiam, Padua

1981

Lewis Johnstone Gallery, London
The Garden of Knowledge, The Critics Gallery, Warsaw

1978

London Calling, Acme Gallery, London and to Peterloo Gallery, Manchester
Sound, Whitechapel Gallery, London

1977

On Site, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol

1975

Garage Art Ltd., London

1974

Off the top of their heads, Artists' Meeting Place, London

1972

Sculpture and sculptors drawings, Annely Juda Fine Art, London

1971

London Art Spectrum, Alexandra Palace, London

1967

Paris Biennale

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

2012

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2011

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2010

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Bell, Kirsty. "The Way We Do Art Now". *Frieze*, Issue 132, August.
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2008

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2005

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2004

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2003

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2002

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2001

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Dorment, Richard. "Idealists with Big Ideas". Daily Telegraph, February.

1999

Panting, Lisa. "Furniture I and II". Contemporary Visual Arts, Issue 23, p.57 (ill.)

1998

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1997

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1996

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1995

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1994

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1993

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1992

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1990

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1989

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1988

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1987

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1986

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1985

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1984

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1983

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1982

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1981

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Januszczak, Waldemar. "Amikam Toren: Riverside". The Guardian, February 26, 1981.

PUBLICATIONS

1991

Amikam Toren, preface Elisabeth A. Macgregor, texts by Christoph Blase, Michael Archer, Conor Joyce and Desa Philippi, Ikon Gallery, Birmingham, Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol

1987

Amikam Toren, Pidgin Paintings, text by Patricia Bickers, Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

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1984

Amikam Toren, Actualities, text by David Coxhead, Matt's Gallery, London

1979

Replacing, Amikam Toren, text by Sarah Kent, Institute of Contemporary Art, London

1974

Amikam Toren, Serpentine Gallery, London (cat.)

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Installation views at **MOT**International Brussels 2014



Amikam Toren, *Neither A Teapot Nor A Painting*
Installation view at MOTInternational Brussels, 2014



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Amikam Toren, *Neither A Teapot Nor A Painting*
Installation view at MOTInternational Brussels, 2014

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Works



Amikam Toren

Stack No.1

1984

Cardboard, pva on canvas
265 x 55 x 55 cm



Amikam Toren
Reproduction No. 64 (Microscopic Plant)
2013
Oil, canvas, pva on canvas
102 x 56 cm



Amikam Toren
Simple Fractions X
1975

Glass, glue, framed drawing
frame: 36 x 40 cm sculpture: 27 x 8 x 8



Amikam Toren
Neither A Teapot Nor A Painting
1979
Mixed media
canvas : 46 x 61 cm shelf : 170 x 15 x 2



Amikam Toren
Neither A Teapot Nor A Painting (detail)
1979



Amikam Toren
Hand in Glove
1996

Pulped glove, acrylic, pva on canvas, glove
170 x 137 cm



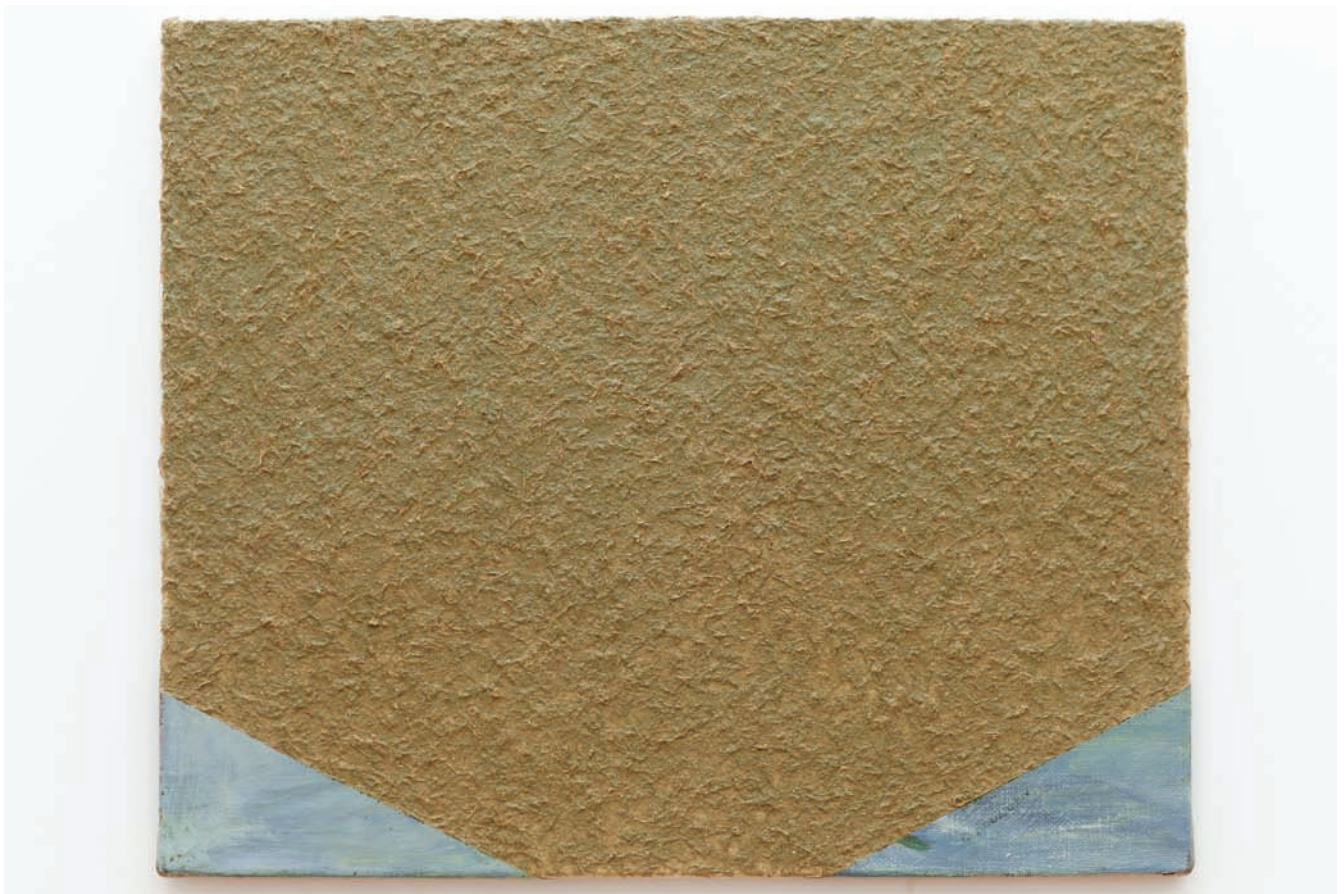
Amikam Toren
Reproduction (Fruits and Sunflowers on a Table Top)
2013

Oil, canvas, pva on canvas
70 x 80 cm



Amikam Toren
Reproduction No. 62 (After Turner)
2012

Oil, canvas, pva on canvas
102 x 56 cm



Amikam Toren
Reproduction No. 33A (Romanian Poppy Flowers)
2013

Oil, canvas, pva on canvas
51 x 61 cm



Amikam Toren
Reproduction No. 26 (Sailing Ship on the High Seas)
2013
Oil, canvas, pva on canvas
61 x 77 cm



Amikam Toren
Reproduction No. 45 (Shelagh's Garden)
2013

Oil, canvas, pva on canvas
77 x 51 cm



Amikam Toren
Reproduction No. 60 (The Sky's the Limit)
2013

Oil, canvas, pva on canvas
51 x 61 cm



Amikam Toren
Reproduction No. 16 (Victoria Park)
2013

Oil, canvas, pva on canvas
46 x 56 cm



Amikam Toren
Reproduction No. 61 (Nina in a Flamenco Dress)
2013

Oil, canvas, pva on canvas
97 x 61 cm



Amikam Toren

Armchair Painting (The End of the World as We Know it)
2007

Oil on canvas, plexi box
81.5 x 51.5 x 5 cm



Amikam Toren
Reproduction No. 34 (The Red Cottage, Reepham Norfolk)
2013
Oil, canvas, pva on canvas
40 x 50 cm

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EMPIRIC OR PICTUR- ESQUE?

JOAN KEY
ON
AMIKAM
TOREN

'Why is the ground more important in a juridical system, whereas in painting, the paint is more important than the canvas?'

It is only then that the problem of the association of ideas discovers its meaning. What is called the theory of association finds its direction and its truth in a casuistry of relations, a practice of law, of politics, of economics, that completely changes the nature of philosophical reflections.'⁽¹⁾

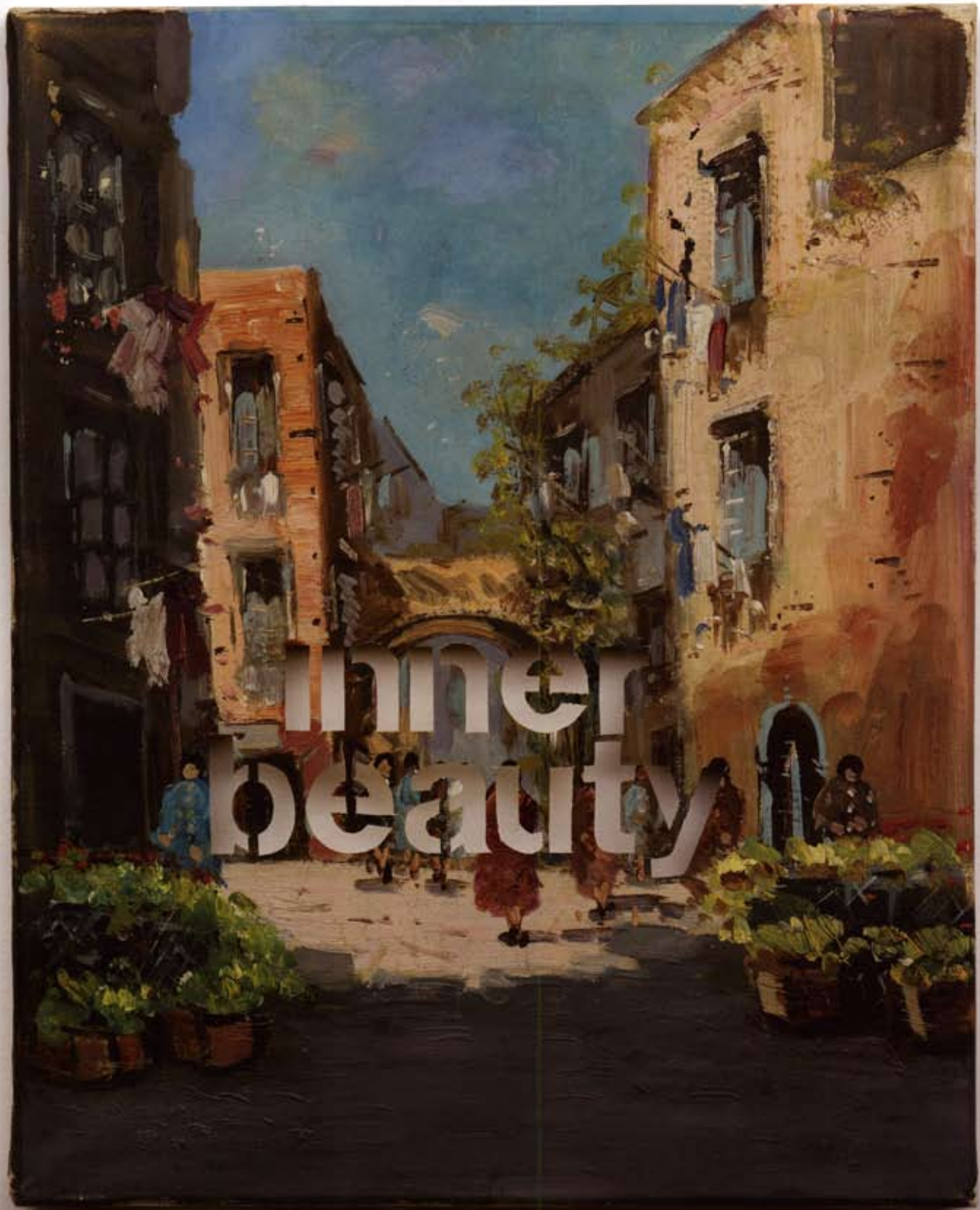
The opening of Gilles Deleuze's essay Hume compares the Eighteenth Century philosopher David Hume's view of the world to a visual experience imagined in the future, or at least a science fiction account of the future. Hume's 'vision', he says, resembles that of an 'alien being' travelling through space; it is as though the philosopher is looking at a site which stands in relation to himself as one of pure exteriority. This creates a 'peculiar' impression for Deleuze, as if Hume sees *'a fictive, foreign world seen by others but with the presentiment of strangeness also one of familiarity, that this world is already ours, and those creatures ourselves'*.

Making sense of this world, as alien being, entails a dual process of attending to specific evidential incidents and attempting to establish their relations. The registrations of this enquiring gaze are, involuntarily, accompanied by associations, a 'delirium' of complex thoughts, the 'casuistry' of relations bringing into question the very structures which might have offered explanations: the Self, the World and God. Enquiry and the effort to legitimate its outcomes bring more questions and associations which in turn bring not only disappointment at loss of trust in stable reference points, but also a question

of the point of replacing one structure with another in order to come to an understanding of the feeling of intimacy that mixes with Hume's strangely blank account of experience.

Acceptance of the limit of explanation brings a sceptical discretion, especially to diagnoses of relation that engage sequential incidents in observation as causal links. Deleuze characterises Hume's logic: *'causality requires that I go from something that is given to me to the idea of something that has never been given to me, that isn't even giveable in experience'*. Inferences, extrapolations, expectations *"the principle of habit of fusion of similar cases in the imagination"*, such considerations merge into beliefs. Deleuze gives some instances, *'for example, based on some signs in a book, I believe that Caesar lived'*. Beliefs become ungovernable, moving with fluidity, from one thought to the next, but in this process of elaboration laws, politics and economics encounter shifting grounds: qualities that might have been considered to be based in specific, verifiable experience assume cosmic and fantastic qualities.

'Empirical account' and 'picturesque view' are phrases connoting different descriptive traditions in narrating visual impressions at the time of the formulation of a modern concept of subjectivity of which Hume's work forms a part. The first term supposes a human capacity to witness, come what may; a 'bundle of sensations' to which the subject brings an immediacy of disinterested response as basis for more regulated judgements. The second term, the 'picturesque', implies an image 'set up' for the subject's interested gaze, something already pictured and framed, recognised from an optimum viewpoint. This subject includes in visual judgement, a desiring research of a familiar choice, one that fits a pre-conceived form whatever pleasures or terrors it may contain.



Summer
beauty



Above: **Armchair Painting - Untitled (witness appeal)**
2008
Oil on canvas
81.5 x 94 x 5 cm

Previous page: **Armchair Painting - Untitled (inner beauty)**
2008
Oil on canvas
50.5 x 41 cm

Both courtesy of the artist and Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London



Armchair Painting - Untitled (Wallbound)
1991
Oil on canvas
49 x 64.5 x 5 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

Enlightened civil society expected its subjects to act as moral and critical witnesses aware of the potential for illusion in the impression of whatever was seen, taking into account questions of viewpoint, optic capacity, and the imaginative and rational bases which subtend the testing and judgement of appearances of reality. The accountancy of 'seeing' and 'believing' produces an association of ideas in which the question of ground is crucial. At the same period there is enormous popular interest in idealised or fantastical constructions, panoramic spectacles of picturesque character, in which disbelief is willingly suspended. The use of lenses for both scientific and phantasmagoric purposes raises in a most immediate way the question of 'ground': at once

emphasising factual possibilities of distance and proximity in telescopic and microscopic visual experience, but at the same time providing ever greater scope for projections, of Magic Lantern, Fantoscope imagery, that feel paradoxically magical but real.

Painting illustrates the problem of 'ground' in a most literal sense because, within its structure, it contains a ground as invisible substrate to the 'picture'. Within painting the juridical idea of ground as evidential resource takes on a more elusive relation to the illusion of the surface it supports, with the resulting 'casuistry' Hume then describes. Caspar David Friedrich provides a concise analysis of this effect in his painting of figures, seen from behind, looking out over fabulous painted



an experiment, and a method to record discovery. This deliberated framework in turn suggests that because of the transparency of means, made evident in the work, the result can be offered to the sceptic observer as having already fulfilled certain tests of verification. However, when considering the outcomes factually positioned in Toren's work, painting itself creates doubts on the level of 'grounds'.

Toren's principle suggests that, if the painting is to represent objects, the essence of objecthood may exist literally in underlying substance that bodies forth the apparent surface of the object.

It should then be possible, by investigatory process of reduction, to find the 'ground' of the object. The object choices Toren makes for his reductions tend to be carriers of illusion in themselves, as if illusion may also be reduced to essence, for example a newspaper, the canvas used in painting, the glove that takes on the movement of the hand, or a printed cardboard box. These familiar things may be reduced to pulp, suspended in transparent emulsion, and coated onto the blank surface of a series of canvases or 'grounds', as if to provide specimens. The painting's ground would, without recourse to illusion, simply convey to

Hand In Glove

1996

Pulped glove and pva on canvas, glove
170 x 137 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London

view the essence of the object destroyed in the process of its own investigation.

In these experiments, surfaces, such as varnish, polish, print, glaze and their intimate grounds of wood, leather, paper, porcelain are first combined or pulverised, and then spread out as if for research. Residues become evidence, such as the mask of facial hair, shaved off and collected daily. Labels and dates, certifications and counterparts offer to reason some kind of guarantee, that this was once that, and the transformation in state was not a question of taste but the result of a necessary enquiry - what does this thing look like if its appearance is freed from known patterns of association formed in the 'casuistry of relations'? This research of 'ground' could be a philosophical end in itself. Something of Karl Marx's understanding of the 'enigmatical character of equivalent form', rehearsed as dialogue of coat-value to linen-value, could be relevant to the close relation Toren proposes: the relative value, for instance, of a teapot-ground to a painting-ground makes comparative reference to different commodity forms and their associated production values. But, if the result failed to represent, was disappointing, became an abject form, lost its former powers to signify, what enigmatic equivalence could explain or contain the logic of Toren's experimental terms? ⁽³⁾

Knowing Toren's processual approach to picturing, 'picturesque' would be an unlikely description of his work. The idea to explore the possibility, first about 1995, when, on a visit to Anthony Reynolds' gallery in Dering Street, I found a small video monitor playing repetitively a clip from John Ford's film *Stage Coach*. Behind the monitor was a blank white panel, arranged as if to stage the presence of the monitor, and extend its illusionist screening into the space of the gallery, which also contained *Narrative Painting Number 2* made of painted letters cut

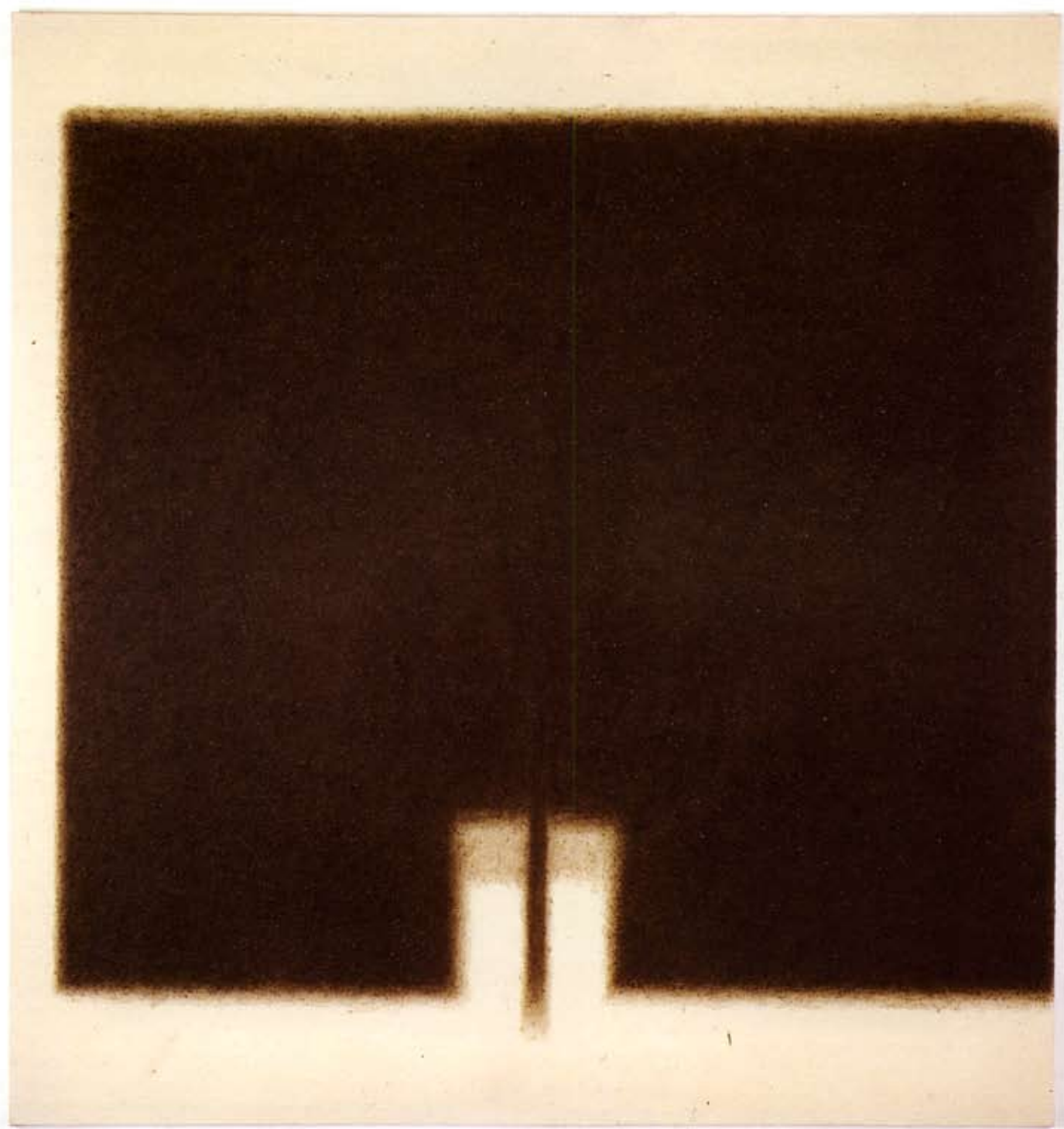
from paintings. Strangely, the richly modelled black and white image on the miniature screen made me think not so much of the Wild West, but of something older, more romantic: Cinderella off to the ball. Perhaps Cinders in her coach was equally desperate, but there were blonde curls to be enjoyed along with flying bullets. There could be no doubt that illusion was important to this work: the doubled image of the inside of the ancient coach (cushioned, erotic) associating with the interior of the modern plastic monitor (brittle, pragmatic); the boxing of the epic film on the small screen re-iterating the Camera Obscura's boxing of the miniature image of the external world, the danger of the gunshot sounds reminding of the on/off play of the shutter/guillotine.

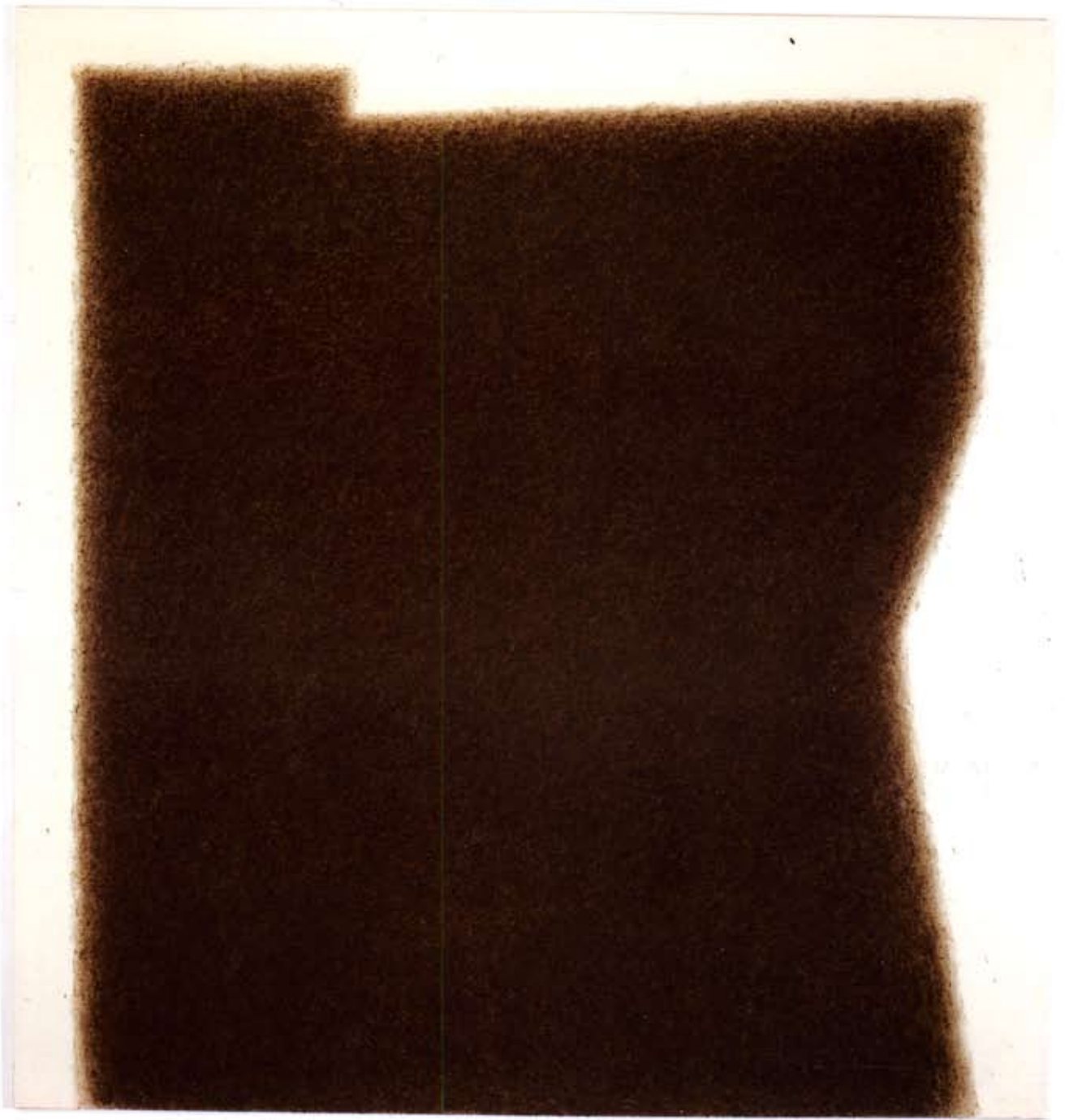
The gallery experience of this set-up was far from cinematic, but cinema remained a point of reference. Cinema is an architecture set-up for projections, offered impersonally, as already 'pictured', for any paying spectator to see the film and experience an anticipated mixture of pleasure and fear. It was difficult to relate this work to Toren's more material researches, most specifically in paintings such as the *Of the Times* series of 1983 whose typographic styles would often refer to Modernist research of relations between figure and ground. This video work suggested intrigues about the picturesque which are less concerned with the determination of 'ground' but with maintaining an indeterminate screen, a functioning interim surface allowing projections of light and mind to coalesce. Toren's use of film raised a question: could the methodical relation of image and ground of Toren's paintings have 'picturesque' intention, when 'picturing' had appeared to be so critically disturbed within his painterly practice?

The picturesque motif does not foreclose on curiosity by verifying what it purports to represent in any immediate

Opposite: *Of the Times* (Friday 4 November 1988)
1989
Newspaper and PVA on canvas
220 x 235 cm

Courtesy of the artist and Anthony Reynolds Gallery, London





allows the displacement of exchange to take place; the mysterious story of how the picture came to be owned by Toren. The work's completion signals a remove. This inevitability functions as an imaginary of loss in picturesque elaboration; if Toren departs from the picturesque effect for reasons of 'ground' it is in the way he brings finality, and concomitant loss, into question by replaying exchange through the token of the *Armchair Paintings*. The completed labour of the first artist is exemplified in the transactional fact of exchange, how the paintings come to be in Toren's possession, but Toren re-opens the pictorial finish by actually cutting open their surface to re-engage in precisely the same labour of making a picture to be exchanged.

In a much earlier example of work with canvas ground, *Untitled*, 1973, the labour of mechanical weaving is 'unwoven' by Toren to provide a different ground for speculation⁽⁴⁾. In this intervention painting itself is pre-empted, stilled by a craftwork of 'drawn thread'. The inspiration that might lead paint to be applied to ground is disrupted by a preliminary question of the work of painting and of weaving. The woven canvas is not blank but a surface in which ideas of work become 'deliriously' speculative. A similar displacement is played out in Toren's more recent video work, *The Bag of Carrots*, where the frustrating stasis of the filmed image creates a tension with the development of the text, not only as a storyline that is failed by the film's title, but as a radical differentiation in the labour of making the soundtrack and the labour of making the film, given emphasis by any speculative expectation of filmic movement being so radically denied satisfaction in the duration of the projection of the still photograph that is the content of the film.

The inference in much contemporary radical practice, that the

revelatory value of such stasis is an unreal or impossible expectation to place upon the artwork, defeats the conjuring trick of what it is to be an artist in Toren's terms. But 'conjuring' has other senses: a desire for something felt as absent to become co-present. The series of ten panels and a chair of 1979-80, *Neither a Painting nor a Chair*, plays with such absence. The title's negative formulation suggests a possible alternative equivalence: 'both' a painting 'and' a chair. It would be impossible to say how this reversal could be explained except to point to another image, a photograph of Toren contorting himself to sit on one of the paintings in the series as if it could support the weight of his co-presence with the flatness of its being. From the look on Toren's face this could be a sceptical comment on picturing a chair or using a picture. His eyes glare at the viewer through the lenses of his spectacles as if to deny either personal folly or the power of illusion. Yet even if he saw a chair quite clearly, he took the precaution of using a support. But what is that sturdy support: the wanderer's walking stick, the magic wand, the stick that ritually sounds three times to mark the beginning of theatre/start of play, or a mystic extra chair leg, or... given the multiplicity of real and imagined legs in the picture... something else again?

The play of 'strange and familiar' in Deleuze's account of Hume's alien gaze suggests the combination of such qualities in Freud's essay *The Uncanny*. Freud recounts sensations of an uncanny affect, using Hoffman's example of the child's fears of the alien view, as he describes another instance of belief in optical mobility through space as their eyes go to the moon with the Sandman, but also remain firmly in their place⁽⁵⁾. Toren's contorted figure poised in illusionistic space, as if on the chair, has, in its prosthetic combination of lenses and stick, something of the Sandman's conjuring tricks. This image relies on what Deleuze refers to as a

'strange battle' in the empiricist world between fiction and Nature: *If it is true that the principles of association shape the mind, by imposing on it a nature that disciplines the delirium or the fictions of the imagination, conversely the imagination uses these same principles to make its fictions or its fantasies acceptable and to give them a warrant they would not have on their own*'. Therefore the painting can, if Toren wishes, act as painting and chair, both flat illusion and substantial object that will support his weight. Viewers may want to distinguish between Toren's legitimate and the illegitimate claim, but Deleuze cautions that in coming to conclusions we are not cursed by error, or falsehood, but by an inability to verify convictions our passions have lead us to believe we legitimately hold.

Toren's practice plays out the suggestion of empirical methodology enshrined in enlightened institutions of civil society, but the implication of the frailty of that methodology in its association with the picturesque is also a responsible concern. The exchanges of politics and fantasy occurring in processes of verification and the practical ways in which the problems of society are posed within the disciplines of law, politics or economics is difficult - at issue is the question of what could possibly constitute the rule of a more humane society if unreason is included in the formulation of its rules. Deleuze offers suggestions on a Humean basis: that it is understood that civil law is not just a matter of 'limiting egoisms' by establishing contractual obligations, but an invention in itself, at once institutionalised but artificial.

If the unpredictable play of passions that emerges from 'the delirium of associations' can be dealt with as a matter of 'the complex relation' between human nature and the objects of its choices, Deleuze proposes that the judicial and cultural needs of members of civil society can be dealt with on the basis of a 'reflection of the passions',

one that teaches about the sentiments of others: the superficial fluctuations of resemblance, taste, contiguity, causality and the serious 'calculus' of desire, possession, power they produce: *'Does the throw of a javelin against a door ensure the ownership of an abandoned city, or must a finger touch the door in order to establish a sufficient relation? Why, according to civil law, does the ground win out over the surface, but paint over the canvas, whereas paper wins out over writing? The principles of association find their true sense in a casuistry of relations that works out the details of culture and law*'. Gilles Deleuze, Hume.

NOTES

(1) Deleuze, Gilles: 'Hume' in *Pure Immanence, Essays on a Life*, trans. Anne Boyman, Zone Books, MIT Press, Cambridge Massachusetts and London England, 2001.

(2) Freidrich, Casper David: For examples of this motif see *Woman at the Window (1822)* and *Moonrise over the Sea (1820-26)*. On the on/off play of vision and darkness Freidrich writes, around 1830: 'close your bodily eye, so that you may see your picture first with the spiritual eye. Then bring to the light of day that which you have seen in the darkness so that it may react on others from the outside inside'.

(3) Marx, Karl: 'The Form of Value or Exchange-Value' in *Capital, Volume 1*, ed. Frederick Engels, Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1970.

(4) See 'Craft' catalogue exhibition at Richard Salmon Gallery 27t September - 8 November 1997 and Kettles Yard, Cambridge 15t November - 4 January 1998 published by Richard Salmon, London, 1997.

(5) Freud, Sigmund: 'The Uncanny' in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works, Volume XV11 (1917-1919)* Trans. Alix Strachey, Vintage, London 2001.



Orange Forms - Joan Key
2012
Oil on canvas
Three canvases each 150 x 190 cm
Courtesy of the artist