

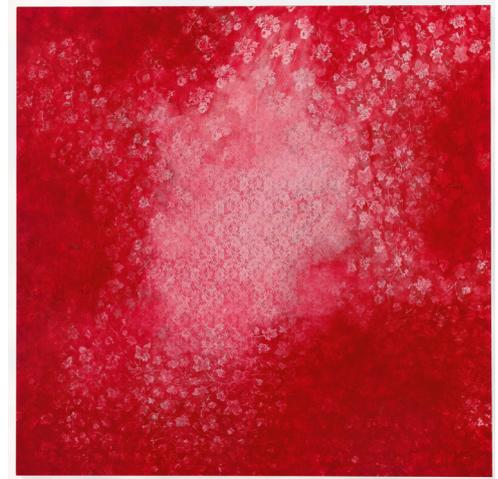
Rachel Howard

Der Kuss

24 January — 17 March 2018

Private View: Thursday 1 February, 6-8pm

Blain|Southern
4 Hanover Square
London W1S 1BP



Rachel Howard, *On Violence (Autumn)*, 2017
Courtesy the artist and Blain|Southern
Photo: Prudence Cuming Associates

Blain|Southern presents an exhibition of Rachel Howard's newest paintings and sculptures, focussing on internal and external violence, the violence of the mind and the body. The title *Der Kuss*, the kiss, suggests a delicate point of intimate contact, of love or betrayal.

The exhibition is divided into two rooms, in the first are paintings of grids and lines, disintegrated surfaces that hint at unstable worlds, entropy and collapse. There are also crashed planes here; based on everyday press images they reflect the relentless menace of death as depicted in the news. Howard suspends the image in a pastel haze, transmuting these snapshots into images of universal suffering, or perhaps they are self-portraits installed into a delicate afterlife, where we can look at them forever.

In the same room, with her new series of sculptures, *Not the last (RSM) #1-7*, Howard has taken packs of kitsch plastic flowers, the type you might find at a makeshift memorial, to reflect on everyday suffering with even more ambiguous forms. Dipping the flowers into an acrylic medium, she repeatedly coats them before they are hung upside down to drip and dry. The plastic stems and petals become soft curves, their forms carved by the force of gravity on a liquid medium. Formed from a blend of artifice and chance, the new objects are then cast in bronze. A simultaneous nod to nature (erosion, gravity, death) and unchangeable synthetic form, time is suspended in the curves and surfaces.

In the second room are the four large abstract paintings that form the quartet titled *On Violence (Spring)*, *On Violence (Summer)*, *On Violence (Autumn)* and *On Violence (Winter)* (2017). *On Violence* is a reference to Hannah Arendt's book that distinguishes between violence and power. When applied to Howard's paintings the title takes on a new rhythmic force. Even as the seasons change, violence persists – even foregrounded – as if it were the driving force to all human history. Meanwhile, the seasons come around again, tucked away in brackets, powerless. The paintings start with a large curtain textile that the artist uses to push paint onto the canvas, revealing patterns, reapplying with varying intensities to create smudges and areas of pooled pigment. The seasons are demarcated subtly by the artist's choice of pattern, which might vary within the same painting. For spring, we see figures from nursery rhymes, while summer is lush with flowers and leaves, and winter's bare tendrils are more rigid and formal. For Howard 'the pattern conjures an interior with a history...' and alludes to the raw fragmented nature of memory, as the pattern is forced onto the surface, but then slips away or is erased. Howard says 'We are presented with endless imagery, shorn off walls of homes in war zones exposing the intimate everyday environment within, broken walls of private spaces of supposed safety.'

Rachel Howard asks us to consider how memory can fix on banal imagery as a reference point for a dramatic or traumatic occurrences such as war. She questions what lies beyond the wallpaper, beyond the surface, beyond the fissures that so often open up in an otherwise unbroken layering of paint.

Der Kuss is accompanied by a new publication featuring colour plates of artworks from 2013 – 2017, museum installation images, reference materials from the artist's archive and texts by Darian Leader, Craig Burnett and poet Kate Dent.

The exhibition is concurrent with two of Rachel Howard's solo museum exhibitions:

Newport Street Gallery, London, 21 February – 28 May 2018

The Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art (MASS MoCA), 17 February 2018 – February 2019

Notes to Editors

About the artist

Howard was born in County Durham in 1969 and graduated from Goldsmiths College, London, in 1991. She was awarded the Princes Trust Award in 1992, was shortlisted for the Jerwood Drawing Prize in 2004 and received the British Council Award in 2008. She lives and works in Gloucestershire and London.

Recent solo exhibitions include: *Rachel Howard*, MACRO Testaccio, Rome IT (2016); *At Sea*, Jerwood Gallery, Hastings, UK (2015); *Northern Echo*, Blain|Southern London, UK (2014); *Folie à Deux*, Blain|Southern, London, UK (2011); *Repetition is Truth*, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donna Regina, Naples, IT (2011); *Still Life / Still Here*, Rachel Howard, New Paintings, Sala Pelaires, Palma de Mallorca, ES (2011).

Recent group exhibitions include: *Age of Terror: Art Since 9/11*, Imperial War Museum, London, UK (2017-2018); *Playground Structure*, Blain|Southern London, UK (2017); *Daydreaming with Stanley Kubrick*, Somerset House, London, UK (2016); *Summer Exhibition 2016*, Royal Academy of Arts, London, UK (2016); *Settle Opere per la Misericordia*, 4th edition, curated by Mario Codognato, Pio Monte della Misericordia, Naples, IT (2016); *Sleepless, Beds in History and Contemporary Art*, 21er Haus, Vienna, AT (2015).

Howard's work can be found in a variety of public and private collections, amongst others: Ackland Art Museum, North Carolina, US; Museum van Loon, Amsterdam, NL; Tate Archive, London, UK; David Roberts Foundation, London, UK; Goss-Michael Foundation, Dallas, US; Olbricht Collection, Berlin, DE; Pio Monte Della Misericordia, Naples, IT; The wareHouse, Wieland Collection, Atlanta, US and the Murderme and Hiscox collections, London, UK.

About Blain|Southern

Blain|Southern is a contemporary art gallery based in London and Berlin. The gallery represents an international roster of contemporary artists and is the world-wide representative of The Estate of Lynn Chadwick. The gallery's recent exhibitions include Jake & Dinos Chapman, Michael Simpson, Bernar Venet, Mat Collishaw, Jonas Burgert, Amy Feldman, Tim Noble & Sue Webster and the critically acclaimed group show, *Revolt of the Sage*.

Blain|Southern
4 Hanover Square
London W1S 1BP

Monday to Friday: 10am - 6pm
Saturday: 10am - 5pm

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