

Rachel Howard

Folie à Deux

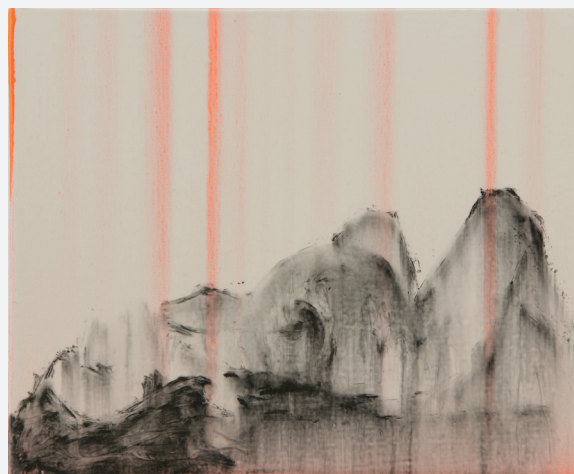
Blain|Southern

21 Dering Street

London W1S 1AL

12 October – 22 December 2011

Preview: Tuesday 11 October 6-8pm



Photography: Peter Mailet

Folie à Deux, 2011, acrylic, household gloss and oil on canvas, 22.9 x 27.9 cm

Folie à Deux, French for 'madness of two', is the clinical definition for a psychosis in which delusional beliefs are transmitted from one individual to another. For her first exhibition at Blain|Southern, the acclaimed British artist Rachel Howard has created a series of intricately linked paintings, hung as triptychs, diptychs and stand-alone works, which subtly explore this disturbing malady.

Folie à Deux can manifest itself in benign and extreme forms, and Howard was struck by a series of recorded case studies. One of these involved a paranoid married couple who both believed intruders were entering their house, spreading dust and 'wearing down their shoes'; another documented the incident of twin sisters, one of whom provoked the other to run into the path of an oncoming car having done so herself a few seconds earlier.

Howard's body of work deals with this notion of two people forming an intense or symbiotic relationship, as alluded to in the central painting of the exhibition, entitled *Folie à Deux*, which shows a heavily pregnant woman lying on her back, head outstretched and legs splayed.

Walter Sickert's paintings provide another stimulus and reference point, in particular his painting *What Shall We Do About The Rent?* Just as Sickert depicted intimate scenes of desolation, so Howard's paintings speak of the emotional tensions that exist within the routines of everyday life. The artist examines commonplace domestic objects including a table, chair and lamp, but depicts them from unusual or unnerving perspectives, suggesting the multifaceted or unfixed state of mind implicit in *Folie à Deux*.

In Howard's trademark style, the gravitational pull causes the paint to seep down the canvases, so that it seems to be clinging on to the works' surfaces, mirroring the acts of desperation that encapsulate the essence of this exhibition. Howard's new work demonstrates the fragility of the human condition, which can be easily unhinged by those around us. As Sartre said: "Hell is other people".

For further information on the exhibition, please contact Mark Inglefield
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Notes to Editors:

Rachel Howard was born in County Durham in 1969 and graduated from Goldsmiths College, London in 1992. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Repetition is Truth*, Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Donna Regina, Naples, Italy, 2011; *Still Life / Still Here*, Rachel Howard, New Paintings, Sala Pelaires, Palma de Mallorca, Spain, 2011; *Human Shrapnel – oil drawings on paper*, Other Criteria, London, 2010; *Der Wald*, Haunch of Venison, Zurich, 2009; *Rachel Howard: invited by Philippa van Loon*, Museum van Loon, Amsterdam, 2008; *How to Disappear Completely*, Haunch of Venison, London, 2008; *Rachel Howard, New Paintings*, Gagolian Gallery, Los Angeles, 2007; and *Fiction/Fear/Fact*, Bohem Foundation, New York, 2007. Howard's work can be found in a variety of public and private collections, amongst others: Ackland Art Museum, North Carolina; Museum van Loon, Amsterdam; David Roberts Foundation, London; Goss-Michael Foundation, Dallas; CCA Andratx, Spain; and the Murderme and Hiscox collections, London.