This catalogue was printed in conjunction with the exhibition

Render
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Screen Space

Cover: Peter Daverington (2012) From the Future With Love #1, Oil on canvas in custom painted frame, 122 x 91cm, Detail, Courtesy of the artist and Arc One

Overleaf (Top): Zac Koukoravas (2014) Consolation, Acrylic on glass and Perspex, 100 x 100cm, Courtesy of the artist and Flinders Lane Gallery

Overleaf (Bottom): Magda Cebokli (2010) Probability, Acrylic on canvas, 91 x 86cm, Courtesy of the artist

In text: Warren Hine (1996) White Light, Oil on board, 60 x 75cm, Courtesy of the artist

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Magda Cebokli | Peter Daverington
Warren Hine | Zac Koukoravas
Curated by Simone Hine
The debates at this time were focused upon the changing status of the photograph as a mechanical evidence of a moment in time. With the ability to seamlessly manipulate images came a questioning of the fidelity of the image. Hine’s work bypassed these debates and instead focused on the possibilities of a new way to paint refracted light. Despite the incorporation of new technologies, the work remained embedded within the painterly sensibility.

In a gesture reminiscent of the impresionist agenda, at another time of significant technological change, Hine applied Photoshop filters to photographs he took of the Brisbane landscape. These images were then transcribed into paint. The extreme incline of the hills in the inner-north of Brisbane creates a particular effect, as the weatherboard houses appear to sit on top of each other, occupying a single plane. The sense of depth is skewed by an ability to see multiple houses rising vertically, as opposed to the horizontal expanses typical of suburban terrain. The particularity of this landscape creates a flattening of the image that is further facilitated by its abstraction into blocks of colour through the use of Photoshop.

At the time of the production of White Light, Photoshop was already gathering prominence as the leading industry tool for the manipulation of photographic images. However, it is only with hindsight that the extent to which the lens of Photoshop would infiltrate photography has become apparent. It is perhaps this prophetic use of Photoshop that embed the painting within the time of its production, while at the same time maintaining its relevance some twenty years later.

Magda Cebokli’s Probability (2010) series utilises computer technology to systemise colour selections in a way that removes the artist’s intent from the construction of the image, leaving the composition of the painting to chance. Cebokli uses a computer algorithm to randomly select numbers which correspond to specific colours on the spectrum from black to white. On a grid-sized canvas, she systematically, and meticulously, paints these randomly selected series of colours onto the grid. The colours are arranged from dark to light, and back again, along the horizontal axis and according to percentages of probability on the vertical axis. The effect produced in Probability/monochrome #4, is the appearance of a black and white arc composed of visible pixels.

Despite each unit of colour having a visual reference to digital pixels, the process Cebokli uses is firmly cemented within Modern art history. The grid formation defined endless practices throughout Modernity. Rosalind Krauss, in her seminal text “Grids” (1979), identifies a common thread between the grids inability to map anything other than the material plane of the canvas, and the rhetoric that so often accompanied its use, which endowed it with a spiritual presence by suggesting that it held the possibility of a universal language, with Piet Mondrian’s use of the grid being an example par excellence. I have evoked this argument in order to suggest that Cebokli engages with this history of the grid in the Probability series, and indeed many of her other paintings, in a way that complicates the possibility of a spiritual reading of the work, because she removes the artist’s intent from the formation of the design. The resulting work is a formal extrapolation of a concept, derived from a series of numbers and then executed on a single painted plane, bringing the work much more in line with Krauss’s initial idea that the grid can mark nothing more than a material surface.

While Cebokli’s work is firmly cemented within a history of geometric abstraction, it stands as a testament to the ever-pervasive presence of digital aesthetics in both our reading of the work in print and the world in general. I find it difficult to imagine a works which claims to have been painted with a painted modernist grid, in these painterly terms, instead I return to the idea that these paintings are the replication of a series of pixels. The smaller works further contribute to this reading because of their visual likeness to Chiharu Shiota’s. Cebokli’s practice draws into question whether it remains possible to look at the Modernist grid, as a key component of the history of painting, without finding references to digital pixels as a symbol of the technological developments that have changed our relationship with the image since Modernity.

Likewise, Zac Koukoravas presents images that could be read as a continuation of a history of experiments with geometric abstraction. However, instead of reducing the picture to a single painted surface, Koukoravas’s paintings are reminiscent of screenshots taken from the AutoCAD program. The black backgrounds support floating objects, whose forms are given volume through the use of gradients. This aesthetic seems particularly reminiscent of these kinds of three-dimensional image-making programs. Koukoravas’s most recent works include a series of lines which outline a figure similar to that of the floating objects. Once again, these lines are reminiscent of the meshes used to construct forms in AutoCAD. If we are to take this program as our reference point, Consolation (2014) can be seen to depict an ambiguous floating form that appears as a folded piece of paper, like a piece of origami that is only half-formed: a reference back to paper, and indeed to the hand of the artist, which is necessarily variable and unpredictable. Each artist seems to fight against the digital, finding recourse in the human gesture of the application of paint.

Simone Hine

Daverington’s approach to representing landscape can be seen in contrast to the approach taken by Hine, and each approach is indicative of the time when the work was made. Daverington’s paintings appear as the product of a time when our lives are saturated with an endless procession of images made possible by digital devices. In the cliché phrase, these images break and dissipate the illusion. Hine’s landscape, on the other hand, was produced on the cusp of these technologies becoming accessible tools for artists to use in the production of work. As such, White Light appears as a formal experiment concerned with the possibilities presented by new technologies. Twenty years later, Daverington’s paintings appear more sceptical of digital visual culture, but the vibrant colour scheme and smooth edges of the fragmented images hint toward a light-hearted approach to this scepticism, which offers a similar sense of enthusiasm for the digital culture it incorporates.

Each of the works in this exhibition evoke a digital aesthetic and meticulously render it in paint. This formal gesture creates a conceptual tension across each of the different works, between the digital and the painterly, the hand of the artist, and the hand of the artist, which is necessarily variable and unpredictable. Each artist seems to fight against the digital, finding recourse in the human gesture of the application of paint.