



Andrea Eckersley, *Partial eclipse*, 2017, oil on linen, 135 x 95cm. Photo: Christo Crocker.

Andrea Eckersley Partial coherence
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Parts of the Lexicon

Andrea Eckersley in conversation with Meredith Turnbull

Andrea Eckersley's expanded painting practice explores a continuum of elements between the functional and non-functional object and the image. Artworks within this lexicon shift between representation and abstraction and together articulate a unique folding and refolding of artworks into diverse possible experiential events. In a recent studio visit I asked Andrea about her practice and the thinking behind her latest project *Partial coherence* at Anna Pappas Gallery.

Meredith Turnbull: Can you tell me a little about what you are showing in this exhibition?

Andrea Eckersley: Images of paintings (originally exhibited for the project *Shed by the sun in eclipse* (2016) at Sarah Scout Presents) were documented and refolded for this new project, along with an older large white/ gold painting. These works are from different times, and different exhibitions, with different aims. Together they are a bit disjunctive, but the older painting kind of still coheres, it is part of the lexicon, part of the language of what I make. So there are four paintings; a shelf with a bronze and a garment; and the light work on the wall in the front. Each of the works engage in some way with the idea of surfaces, activating the surfaces of the linen and canvas with paint, activating the surfaces of the wall with the light and paint, and the dress as fashion is working with activating the surface of the body. The dress

brings in the suggestion of the body of the wearer as another kind of surface that I'm interested in.

MT: I like the fact that with each composition you only see the surfaces that are exposed to you. With the paintings or with the garment, in your mind's eye that is a 360-degree object that you can see from another view, but here in the physical realm not all of these surfaces are revealed.

AE: I understand this as a sort of temporal spatial refolding with different surfaces appearing at this time. This is part of what I mean by activating surfaces in that depending on how surfaces are rendered in each particular work, or even in each particular iteration or folding of a piece, each iteration presents a different surface and a different opportunity to activate a surface somehow.

MT: Where does the colour shift in your palette come from?

AE: The colour palette in the new paintings comes from the original paintings and the print out photographs that were then made into new paper models. The paintings from the Sarah Scout Presents project were photographed then printed out and paper models were constructed from these images. This process obviously altered the rendering of colours in each work which I found interesting.

MT: These are very beautiful and seductive images, there is something dynamic about the colour combination in a different way to your previous works. The deep contrast between the blacks, browns and the whites. Are you intending to leave them like this?

AE: There's a little bit more work to go, with the different dark tonal areas in the background. But they are almost finished.

MT: One of the things that the colour does change though is the blur between representation and abstraction, and this is something we have talked about before in relation to your work. The paintings sit between formalism, abstraction and representation in a different way to some of your previous works. They are almost more ambiguous than previous works. You still get a strong sense of the spatial quality of the form, but there is also something more graphic in these new works. Is that a conscious decision or has it occurred through the making process?

AE: That probably comes through the refolding of the work in which I am constantly being exposed to different colour combinations. What I have tried in the new series of works is not just simple colour blocking that previous works have utilized but more of the shading of surfaces. And I'm trying to be explicit about this shading in a painterly fashion rather than rendering tight lines. I'm enjoying the colour mixing and trying to figure out how I can work really simply with the colour of the shading.

MT: They sit very well together. You're having a 1970s glam moment with the copper, the chocolate brown.

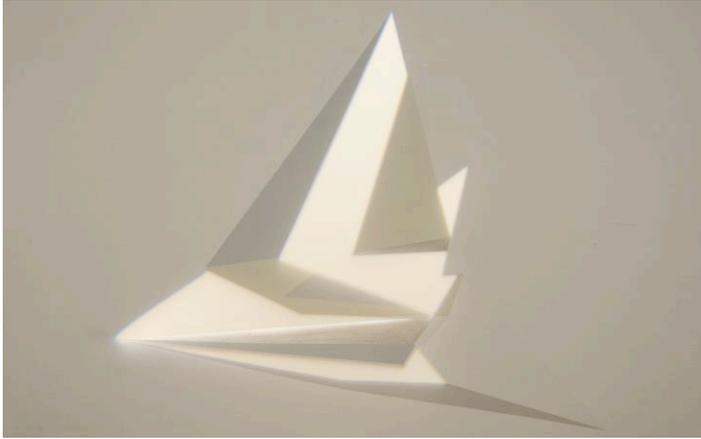
AE: A domestic or a fashion moment?

MT: Both. That's interesting, does the palette evoke certain pictures in your mind?

AE: I think yes, once all the components come together. The relationships between colours are really important to me. I'm sensitive to what's going on colour-wise in fashion but also domestically as well and I think about living with the paintings. But I don't really know what's in fashion at the moment, if that's *fashionable*. But what I'm actually trying to do is work towards black paintings. In the past, for example with the wall works, I was trying to work towards making white paintings. I was trying to find what were the minimum conditions for a painting to exist. So with this new series I'm trying to work towards black but I keep getting caught up in the

sepia, in the browns and these, as you suggest, dynamic colour combinations. And they are really exciting, and so even though I might draw from the folded maquette there is a lot of freedom to play around with the shadows and the way the colours relate to each other and the different hues I might want to work with.

MT: It does seem though that the colour is derived from the process more than applied retrospectively to the work. It comes through the making. That's interesting in and of itself.



Andrea Eckersley, *Partial coherence*, 2017, site-specific painting and light installation, dimensions variable

MT: I want to ask you about material, how you approach an idea of material across different media?

AE: Working with fabric is a very different making process than working with paint or balsa or paper, in the sense that you just have to make different decisions with fabric, to get those exact points, you need to move the pattern out so the garment can be finished cleanly. With the shelf, Richard working with ply was important because you can see with the cuts he has made in the different surfaces, layers and textures of the wood, of the raw material if you like. And so

with each iteration there is absolutely, a different attention to the material that creates something unique in the form. So what happens when working with paint on linen is different to working on canvas and is different again to working directly on the wall. I enjoy going between the different materials and media and having to think about how I can achieve what I'm looking for.

MT: What about, how they relate philosophically? For example in relationship to the philosophy of surface activation?

AE: For me activating surfaces is a form of intensification and this intensity relates to event philosophy, in that an intensive qualitative moment needs to occur for any surface activation to actually take place. In this concept of the event, it's misleading to think that the event ever really has a beginning or an end, or at least ones that we could ever reasonably identify. This means that we are always in the middle of an event. The intensive moment is crucial to the structure of the event. The way that I understand this within my work is that the event of the work doesn't start with the maquette and end up with the painting, it doesn't even start with the piece of paper. Each work proceeds by way of a series of constant re-foldings, reinvestigations, looking at how the maquette or these shapes or these angles are explored through the different materials. The way that these new paintings are refolded images of compositions from the previous show, exposes a form of temporality in my work.

MT: Do you feel that all material is subject to this event philosophy in your practice?

AE: Yes. You can talk about event philosophy as it relates to any art, for me this approach helps to explain the sense of what art does. Art is an intensive moment when we experience something different, something new, for better or worse. But as an artist this experience can also come well before what happens in an exhibition in that there are always things happening in the studio, these intensive qualitative moments that happen along the way. These moments also have implications later as they may create the impetus for a new work, or I might write about the work in a different way because of one of these moments, so these intensive moments continue to occur and to have an impact long after the actualisation of an artwork. For me thinking about making art is to explore this idea of intensive activation and surface activation through multiple material iterations.

MT: How do you generate the shape of the wall work? Is it also from a paper maquette? What or where is the form derived from?

AE: Yes this shape is also derived from a paper maquette. Then I make a painting of this maquette on canvas and then work with that painting to think about which sections would work best as illuminated elements. This articulates the idea that the light is as important to the surfaces of the painting as the paint. I am trying to make it explicit that you need the light to see the painting on the wall, and that the illumination is as much part of the composition as is the wall itself. So I had a gobo made that masks part of the light and allows the illumination through in certain sections. It's a stainless steel stencil cut out that slots in between the stage light and the lens. There is I hope a sense or a question of where the painting on the wall begins and ends. There are no boundaries between the light and wall: between the light, my painted additions on the wall and the existing surface of the white gallery wall.

MT: Is there anything that we haven't touched on about the work that you would like to discuss?

AE: Bringing fashion back into my practice. I had spent a long time writing and thinking about what was happening to bodies when engaging with art and I wanted to make the body explicit in my practice. I have made garments in relationship to paintings before but I had never felt comfortable in their display. It always felt contrived. But this idea of the dress being part of a composition for me at this stage feels as if it is the beginning of a new and exciting part of my practice.

MT: That's interesting because one of the things that strikes me is that unless you have some knowledge of your process and practice you can, on one level, approach these as pure, formal, compositional artworks. But on the other hand they are all handmade. It's important that they are folded and derived from your own subjectivity, your making, your physicality but that's not necessarily made apparent to the viewer. However with the inclusion of other objects it is. Particularly with ones that reference the body because it makes you rethink how they are formed. It reveals more of the complexity of the painting, of the objects and of the practice as a whole.

AE: The attention to detail in the construction of the garment is the same as the paintings, and the bronze and the shelf, the objects. You start with a piece of paper and you intensify it by folding it, you transform it, the same way that you have a blank canvas, or wall, you do something to the wall, you activate those surfaces. You have a piece of fabric, you alter it, you cut it up, these pieces are separate but you bring them together as a garment. I have these separate balsa wood pieces then they are brought together and cast in bronze. So all the works call for this kind of attention to detail, which is obviously also important in the way I want to draw the various works together for the show. But they only partially cohere! I don't want to draw all the details together too tightly, because I want to leave open a space to work on for the next iteration of these pieces.