

FRAN RICHARDSON
Interior Castle

Private view: 9 March 2011

Exhibition: 10 March – 8 April 2011

gallery opening times: tues. – fri. 10 – 5.30 +
sat. 11 – 2

Nearest tube: pimlico



This exhibition of finely rendered charcoal drawings takes the celebrated 1579 book by the mystic St Teresa of Avila as a point of departure to propose a visual contemplation on perception, memory, and the symbolic nature of interior space.

During a meditation Teresa had a vision in which the soul was ‘a castle made of a single diamond ... in which there are many rooms, just as in Heaven there are many mansions.’ This body of work explores the opulent splendour of the various rooms through which the soul in its quest for perfection must pass before reaching the innermost chamber, the place of complete transfiguration. We are invited as voyeurs to enter a private world of intimate spaces imbued with hidden meaning and complex emotions.

Building on previous series of interiors, Richardson continues to explore the representation of psychological space by blending architecture and furniture from different sources through a process of appropriation, selection, collage, and re-presentation. The fragmented imagery is transformed by design elements such as cropping, reversing, and redrafting. Perspectival irregularities are exploited to subtly disrupt the final composition, suggesting a sense of unease that questions our perception of reality and the enigma of appearances.

The drawing process facilitates the manipulation of tone by employing a meticulous technique that carefully distributes deposits of charcoal onto the surface. Value is achieved by controlling the extent to which the texture of the ground shows through the spread of black: in this sense we are presented with the materiality of the surface as much as the image. For Richardson drawing is a primary activity and a stand-alone medium; these works are not the evidence of a preliminary stage that serves painting as a conceptual aid, they are finished works in their own right. Charcoal was selected because it is receptive to minor adjustment permitting subtle gradations in tonal value and sharp contrast between the pure white of the paper to the dense, velvety blackness of the shadows, conveying a sense of ethereal, atmospheric mystery that references early film noir.

By combining the imaginative transformation of appropriated imagery with a realist language that evokes the naturalistic qualities of light, space, and atmosphere, Richardson works in the Dutch tradition of painting imaginary architectural portraits. All works on paper are professionally framed to archival standard in hardwood box frames glazed with Water White ultra clear glass, which is anti-glare, anti-reflective, and UV protective.

Richardson was recently awarded The Arts Club Charitable Trust drawing prize at the National Open Art Competition, the Brian Sinfield Fine Arts Award at Pastels Today and the Visitors' Choice Award at the Brighton Festival Selectors' Choice exhibition. Drawings were also selected for the Manifest International Drawing Annual 4 and Drawing Room II, a survey of contemporary drawing at the Royal West of England Academy. Fran Richardson is represented by Long & Ryle, London and is a visiting lecturer at the City & Guilds of London Art School, London.

Please contact Emma Wingfield or Sarah Long for further information.

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