

“...like dancing to dogs.”

Stuart Edmundson
The International 3

It is always a privilege to be invited into an artist's studio particularly when they are in the middle of preparation for an imminent exhibition. It is a wonderfully personal and private insight into the working methods, pre-hang testing and thinking processes embedded within the work. It is a moment in which you can see how selections are made, how things/objects may work with each other, a continuous dialogue between the artist and the work through which the exhibition is finally generated. At least this is how I felt on leaving Stuart Edmundson after a recent studio visit to look at the work being made for this one-person show at The International 3. It is also a wonderful point at which the nature of the studio and the artist's use of their studio become tangible, highlighting their working practices. How an artist engages with their studio is often a reflection of that work and working practice, however we all shift that usage as and when the need applies.

This is the point at which our discussion started and enlightened the conversation from that point forwards. Edmundson explained the sense of what the studio now means to him, and how his engagement with it often orients the nature or 'feel' of the practice. The key moment, Edmundson explained, stemmed from a residency in Dresden, 2008, through which he was able to readdress his approaches to working and consider the studio and consequently the production of work within it afresh.

It is interesting to see how this show, in 2015, has been developed in the context of the structure of Edmundson's previous solo exhibition at The International 3 in 2010. Preparation for that show took the form of models being constructed and individual works being allocated to space, which effectively defined the show even before entry to the space of the exhibition. The method of construction of the exhibition and the way in which the show will come together in 2015 is very different, hinging upon one particular 'device' or 'armature' to be placed within the space. This becomes a tool to activate the objects, which lie beyond and around it as well as the spacing device for the exhibition.

In effect, although the exhibition becomes the installation of prefabricated objects, the actual installation of those objects works with (and importantly within) the space of the gallery. It is in this way that the aforementioned armature (a four-panel screen with routed apertures) breaks up, but at the same time creates the underpinning structure for the entire show. This freestanding screen, somewhat akin to a 19th century 'folding/vanity screen', structures a link between the architectural space(ing) of the gallery and the work therein installed. But, rather than obstruct, hide or obscure that which is beyond it, this screen disrupts the space but also works with the other works themselves and acts as a method for allowing the works to 'talk' to each other.

The use of the screen is multiplied throughout the exhibition, the central four-panel screen, the projected image, which itself constructs a filmic screen or the painted surface (its constraints) constructing yet another form of screen or frame. This device and its multiple or variable uses within this exhibition stands core to the principles of Edmundson's current practice. Moving beyond the screen or frame, for a moment, allows the consideration of its importance within the practice to be outlined. There are many different approaches to painting and there are also many alternate, often conjectural, opinions upon its so-called condition as well. Rather than convolute this discussion through a critique centralised within an expanded field¹ or form of practice, it is more important to acknowledge this and move on to perceive that this is not simply the expanding of the practice or discipline of painting (or an acclaimed return to the facticity of the stuff). It is quite possibly more interesting to look at the constraints imposed upon painting and the similarities of those constraints to the constraints of others. This

¹ Krauss, Rosalind. *The originality of the avant-garde and other modernist myths* (MIT Press. 2002)

therefore constructs a double argument, a conjectural doubling, through which the work can be examined, that of the screen and that of the frame, both of which have spatial and temporal importance. It might be possible to argue for these together but for the purposes of this text they will be separated and proposed alongside one another to explore the questions, experimentations and propositions emanating from the studio activities outlined above.

The discussion starts from the position of painting, through which the frame can be identified as a particular element of painting (if we count the sub-armature – or skeletal device beneath the canvas/board as the frame). If this frame is disrupted or removed from its more conventional position into an alternate space then that frame becomes a *framic device* through which other options become available beyond the flat surface of painting, which consequently engage directly with ‘real’ space and permeate through that space as individual framic moments constructing a multiplicitous whole. This effectively acts, or can be considered as a series of selective aggregated individualities, which, combined as the viewer moves through the space, create a defined interrelated (or fractured) conversation or dialogue between the works and the space of the gallery.

On another note, as this has now come up twice in this text, it may all sound rather strange to suggest that artworks are in dialogue with one another, but within this exhibition, it is actually a fundamental tactic, employed by Edmundson. This became apparent during the studio visit, where works were being displayed alongside and in close proximity to one another. Essentially the installation of the exhibition becomes focused through a dialogue between things, whether that is the space and the work, the space and the screen/framic device or the screen and the other installed works.

To return to the frame/screen strategy being employed by Edmundson, it is clear that his use of the moving image has a profoundly painterly (in particular, the divisively abstract right hand part of the screen) feel. It is in this regard that the screen becomes so important, alongside the frame (and disrupted framic device) with particular reference to painting, where notions of the cinematic have interspersed much discussion around painting over recent years. The moving image, just as it sounds contains conditions that are alien to the static ‘screen’ of painting, yet a stretching through the temporal employed by Edmundson within the usage of the centralised four-panel screen in terms of the manner in which the viewer can interact with the work, disrupts the interconnectivity between the static and that which is in motion.

The show brings together multiple strategies hinged around the central armature of the four-panel screen, an interplay and coalescing of the questions raised and decisions made in the studio. The different aspects of the show, whilst coming together as a collective whole also permit (and this refers to the *framic device* mentioned earlier) a form of punctuation. This creates a stop/start sense of looking, a pause in the time of looking to rethink it allowing for the sense of a punctuated time in the work through the organisation of the space. The wallpaper also adds to the overall interrelationships between the works and creates an exciting additional component, which again strikes against and at the same time runs with the other surfaces and screens within the overall installation.

This challenging exhibition is evidence of the continuous exploratory nature inherent in Edmundson’s approach to the production of work, demonstrating the complexities of an intense studio engagement, in addressing important contexts and questions facing the practice of contemporary painting. I hope you enjoy the show.

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