

Herald St | Museum St

Space is not neutral. As Georges Perec wrote in *Species of Space* (1974), 'space is a doubt: I have constantly to mark it, to designate it. It is never mine, never given to me, I have to conquer it'. Ida Ekblad's deliberately macho series of new paintings are a transgressive gesture towards such ownership, a bold reclaiming of the male-dominated realm of large-format expressive paintings.

Vibrant colours of plastisol and puff paint are densely applied with a rough impasto, forming sculptural surfaces, incised with brushstrokes and moulded by Ekblad's fingers. Now transformed into a painterly medium, the mixture of plastisol and puff paste was originally used by Ekblad as a teenager to make 3D screen prints for t-shirts. In a similar way to her Situationist-inspired 'drifts' (where the artist would walk through cities scavenging discarded materials from scrapyards to form composite sculptures), here she continues to salvage old objects and media now deemed obsolete or tasteless and injects them with fresh meaning.

Responding freely to established genres, Ekblad's work merges high and low culture. Samples from the miscellanies of popular culture, including designs of her old childhood vinyls, feature in her paintings. An abstracted fragment of a 'Cry Tuff' record appears in one painting while another bears the logo of London Records and the recognisable typeface of Northern Soul. Inspired by a trip that Ekblad made to Venice at an early age, voluptuous Murano vases and urns are painted into various foregrounds, referencing the traditional art historical vocabulary of still life. Elsewhere Ekblad playfully displaces the flowers from the empty Murano vase in *The sound of a record when it's over*, freeing them to float, detached, in a sea of blue. While the urns Ekblad paints may be associated with storing the remains of the dead, any allusions to mortality are eclipsed by the visceral energy of these intuitive paintings, rooted as they are in the artist's immediate experience of the world around her. As she explains in a previous interview (*Mousse*, 2010), 'Painting to me combines expressions of rhythm, poetry, scent, emotion... It offers ways to articulate the spaces between words, and I cannot be concerned with its death, when working at it makes me feel so alive.'

Text by Jessica Freeman-Attwood

Ida Ekblad (b. 1980, Oslo) lives and works in Oslo. Recent exhibitions include: *University of Disaster*, Venice Biennale, National Pavilion Bosnia & Herzegovina, Palazzo Malipiero, Venice (2017), *Diary of a Madam*, Kunsthaus Hamburg, Hamburg (2017), BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (2015), The National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design, Oslo (2013). In 2018 Ekblad will have a major solo exhibition at Museo Rufino Tamayo, Mexico City.