



In this issue

Jonathan Stubbs talks to 2014 graduate Aimee Parrott about her exhibition at Breese Little

An extract from **Marisa Futernick's new artist book, 13 Presidents**, published by Slimvolume

In advance of **Premiums 2017**, RA Schools Patrons talk about their favourite artworks purchased from the RA Schools

Text by Lyton Talbot to accompany 2015 graduate Matt Ager's exhibition at Studio_Leigh

Aimee Parrott

Cover image: Artists' Book
Exhibition at Horatio Jr

Above: The Kennington
Residency. Installation
shot, work by Sean
Steadman and Kira Freije



Aimée Parrott graduated from the Schools in 2014 has since exhibited on a regular basis in London, Manchester and Cornwall. She met Jonathan Stubbs at her most recent solo presentation in Breese Little, Bethnel Green.

AP: The run up to this show was unusual. It was planned for the spring, giving me about six months to make the work – a good amount of time for a solo show of this scale. But, the space wasn't ready and I broke my left elbow (I'm left handed). As a result I had almost a year to make the show. Because of this the work had a lot of time to evolve, there was space to experiment and allow things to fail. I think the consequence of this is that the focus of my practice has shifted slightly and I've become a bit braver.

JS: How did the period when you weren't able to make work because of your elbow affect you? Obviously your thought process doesn't stop, but previously your work has been quite driven by process and making.

AP: Yes, up until recently my practice was process led. I would start by experimenting with different materials and then evaluate and make decisions based on what I'd learnt. But after the break I couldn't lift anything – and so couldn't make large scale work. As a result of this I did a lot of drawing and started making books out of a series of



Parkwood Coffee
Cone and Mug from
DOHM

monotypes. The fluidity of the process means that one drawing leads into the next – it is quite a quick way of generating ideas and imagery. I found this period altered the way I work. Drawing has become a way of thinking through ideas and, as a result, my recent works are more concerned with form and consequently figurative elements have crept in. On reflection the accident was a good excuse to rethink the way I approached things.

JS: Did the figuration come through creating accidental forms, or through deliberate decisions?

AP: It was deliberate. I found through drawing I was able to develop a new visual language to shift a pre-existing conversation, to complicate my practice with recognisable forms whilst retaining an interest in materiality and gesture.

It allowed me to more directly reference the body. As a female artist referencing the nude, I find myself in complicated territory – just as in life as I woman I find I am holding myself and being held to conflicting standards. In one moment being judged on an intellectual level, and as an object the next. The female forms look at different types of scrutiny, some are introspective, examining self-portraiture (for example Faint), or coming from an internal viewpoint (e.g. Percussion, Nerves), others are seen as though from external perspective like classic nudes, a voyeuristic gaze.

JS: Previously the work talked about the body in terms of action as well.

AP: Yes – in terms of gesture and scale. I was quite particular about the scale I worked in. I focused on portrait size, where I was engaging the hand and the wrist, or a much larger scale which meant employing the whole body to make marks. For me the most interesting thing about making painting is in creating an object that has a bodily presence or trace as well as a visually engaging image. It is the duality of painting; its material presence at odds with the illusion of space that gives it such a density. By reintroducing figurative elements whilst combining them with a complex handling of the surface I hope to highlight this dualism.

JS: But the materiality can still reference the body as well as the form?

AP: Yes, there is possibility for metaphor – thinking about the surface as a permeable barrier – a membrane or skin. Reference to this metaphor comes up over and over again in the show; pigment sits under the surface of the fabric, colouring it like blood colours skin. The thread in pieces like Communion interrupting the composition like stitches, the batik marks are surrounded by a dark waxy residue which look like a secretion or greasy mark. So there is a slightly abject undercurrent referencing bodiliness that runs alongside the more obvious depictions of forms.

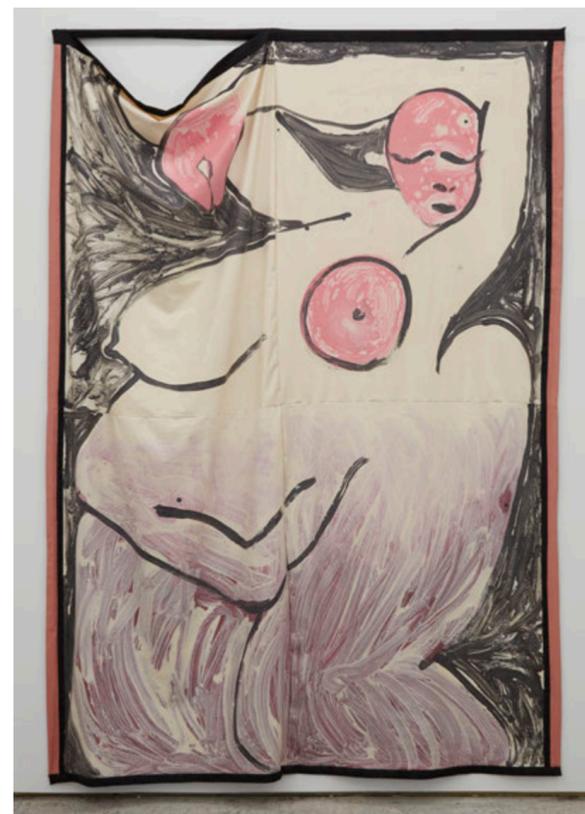
JS: How has using form affected your way of creating space within the picture plane? The previous work relied on mark, light and atmosphere to talk about the relationship between the surface and the space. But now you are using form, it creates space in a totally different way.

AP: That is something that I have struggled with. One way I have tried to get around it is by interrupting the figure so there is room to doubt it. To keep it shifting in and out of focus. When you are using a figure, the form will always be the most prominent thing, but you can still be caught on the surface.

I think that is why I still like making more ambiguous works. I don't want to shift completely to figuration; I want to keep the play between the two. I really like the openness of abstraction, the associations keep rolling. Once you make something that looks like something or is nameable it can become slightly more direct or closed. So this new territory is problematic, but interesting.

JS: There is a boldness in tackling the subject. You said before that you find it hard to talk about the female body. But, by making this work, you are saying “I am talking about it”.

AP: I think I want to bring the subject to the table, to let gender be one of the discussions around my work. With the large latex work, Banner, I wanted



Andrew Munks at
Watch It Gallery

to make something that was contradictory rather than didactic. Although on the one hand it is a graphically bold piece depicting a huge, towering female figure, I also see her as an incredibly vulnerable form, exposed, blushing and bald with her eyes averted drooping under the weight of the viewers gaze.

JS: With a lot of these processes you are never quite sure what you are going to get.

AP: Yes, for me there needs to be an element of discovery in the work to keep things energetic. For example, pigments have different weights so when staining the surface with a mixture I can never be quite sure how the colours with separate and change as they dry. I find that it is this sense of embracing chance and grappling or reaching out to the limits of my knowledge that keeps the practice mobile. As soon as I know exactly how a material or technique is going to behave I need to find another irritant.

JS: Also with the work there is one hit – most of the time you can't rework these.

AP: I think that's because my earliest work was using watercolour, I inherited this transparent way of applying colour and using the surface of the fabric as a source of light. It means that every mark is seen in relation to the one before – nothing is totally hidden only partially obscured. A result of this method is that many of the works fail if ones confidence falters or the surface is overloaded. Recently pragmatic moves such as working on the underside of overworked fabric or appliquéing patches on have meant that my success rate is slightly higher!

The drive to experiment with materials is a facet of my practice that I developed at the RA Schools. When I started there I wanted to question habits that I'd built up. I let my practice fall apart which was very uncomfortable – but I did that in the knowledge that I had the time and the space to take chances, to let things fail and have time to rebuild. In the current climate it is one of the few places where post graduate art students are really supported. The three years granted as well as lack of fees and the availability of small bursaries means that the pressure is relieved enough for each artist to properly examine their practice.

Aimée Parrott
BRESE LITTLE
Until 26 November 2016
www.breeselittle.com