

Clare Goodwin

Whispering Widows

26 August to 7 October 2017

Opening reception: Friday, 25 August 2017, from 6 to 9pm

“Lavender is an old, old, old, old lady. Lavender is (aren't you?), I thought you were. Lady Lavender, cobwebbed by spiders ... keeper of dark corners.”¹

Marriage springs to mind when thinking about Clare Goodwin's painting practice. Maybe it's the notion of wives left behind implied by the title of this, her first solo exhibition at Lullin + Ferrari Gallery in Zürich, but the sense of an unorthodox relationship in play has perhaps always been present in the details. For these precise, rigorously devised and carefully executed arrangements of abstract forms have been shaped by a seriously eclectic and ever-expanding inventory of source materials.

Goodwin has consistently used forenames to title her paintings. High art and home decoration appear to meet in a chromatic soap-opera on canvas that implicates a host of potential human characters in its credits. While the twinning of British names with infinitely more international motifs – that take us on a windy journey through the history of abstract painting – provides curious food for thought, it is Goodwin's profound collector's connection with past ideas and ephemera that enables her human narratives to take flight in the imagination, however minimal the constellations may appear.

“Impossible to understand, beige, unless you stare at him hard, stare at him in the middle of his wise; unless you see beige in the seriousness beigeness of being its' beige self.”²

Goodwin's survey exhibition 'Constructive Nostalgia' at CentrePasquArt Biel in 2016 – featuring domestic dioramas of two- and three-dimensional works and architectural interventions – provided veritable stage sets for her investigation of the past as an aesthetic currency of the present. By contrast, 'Whispering Widows' immediately sparks the idea of a possibly complicated and rather gossipy female cast of protagonists. 'Widow' translates as “be empty” in Old English, a strange definition perhaps in that it implies active choice in, or acceptance of, the state of abandonment. As an umbrella sensibility for the exhibition, however, it fortuitously describes the stripped-out, highly edited dynamism of Goodwin's latest works, on canvas, paper and in object form.

Known for her hard-edged compositions and bold colour combinations, in recent bodies of work Goodwin has introduced a new chance element to the process of making her paintings. Where previously she has allowed the meeting and misalignment of forms in space to imply a compositional game in progress, the new lexicon of motifs appears to sit on or grow out of washy, amorphous grounds. This contradiction between compositional ingredient and spillage, active design and accidental outcome quite literally brings an extra dimension into view. Where other works have played with the idea of raw canvas ground operating as both barrier and surface, in more recent paintings the motifs appear to have gained the upper hand, setting the terms of the optical illusions created.

While Goodwin has in the past stripped back her compositions to a level of Malevich-ian simplicity, in the new works she goes a step further, bringing down the tone and contrast of her chosen palette to almost-mute pastel percentages in some instances. One can't help but think

of screen display when contemplating the make-up and relationships of particular colours, especially when looking at them through the vinyl-coated gallery window, purposely rose-tinted for the duration of the show. However, it's the analogue metaphors that tend to endure in the case of Goodwin's new candy-coloured spectrum – the creation of music or sounds and the physical slide of a fade button on a mixing desk, for example.

Given the title of the exhibition, it's hard not to imagine them as the colours of a curtain-twitching realm in which knowledge is passed, need-to-know, through cupped hands to willing ears. In fact, these new compositions have evolved directly from an earlier series of Goodwin's 'curtain' paintings. The final scenes of the 1975 film version of the *Stepford Wives* spring to mind; a supermarket swirl of faded-out fabrics and floppy hats in confectionary tones.

In using pastels, Goodwin brings a range of past and present of issues around art, design, memory and taste – good and bad, out of date or fashionably retro – into question. They are colours as much a part of everyday stories as the formal legacies of Agnes Martin, Avis Newman and Eva Hesse et al. It's easy to imagine a series of meta narratives chattering away under the surface of Goodwin's Rorschach backgrounds – on where avocado bathroom suites sit in the annals of design history, say, or how pale is too pale a pink for the mother of the bride before she fades out of the picture altogether/strays into bridal gown territory.

There is much evidence of the hand and processes of manufacture in this exhibition; a sense of being kept grounded, perhaps, in the esoteric terrain of colour theory. Goodwin has also included a series of cut-out works and several vulnerably positioned sculptures on the pristine-white gallery floor. Seemingly cut from other works on paper and box-framed in desirable clusters, these collages recall a distinctly British art history. Naturally, Matisse looms large in such a context, but here the baby blues and sandy tones also appear reminiscent of the St Ives group and the landscape, as opposed to interior spaces or the body, broken up into a series of unsolvable puzzles. In contrast, the sculptures might be presumed things of artifactual or anthropological significance were it not for the fact they have been left on the floor. These sand-blasted legs and spindles, bone-like in their delicacy, together form part of an old wooden chair.

Once again, Goodwin, in her role as curator of lost things and a custodian of the past, joyfully reminds us of the different intellectual spaces afforded by the non-representational world – with its grids, blots and swatches – into which we can reconnect with and leave behind vestiges of our own personal stories.

“Take a real close look and you begin to see why there is much more to white, much more than can ever meet the eye. Why, look over there, looks for sure like the white they call pure, but it isn't at all. That's an off-white white, sorry.”³

1, 2 and 3 taken from Ken Nordine's *Word Jazz Colours* (1966)

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Clare Goodwin, born 1973 in Birmingham, lives and works since 2003 in Zurich. Studied at Winchester School of Art from 1993 to 1996 (BA Painting) and at the Royal College of Art, London from 1996 to 1998 (MA Painting). Solo exhibitions include *Constructive Nostalgia*, CentrePasquArt, Biel (2016); *Broken Parallels*, Karin Sachs Gallery, Munich (2014); *Bradford Jolly*, Christinger De Mayo Gallery, Zurich (2014); *Unforced Errors*, CGP London (2013); *Clare Goodwin feat WeAreTheArtist*, Kunsthalle Winterthur (2012); *Kiss on the Blue*, Rotwand Gallery, Zurich (2011).

The opening reception takes place Friday, 25 August 2017 from 6 to 9pm. The artist will be present. For further information and images please contact Lullin + Ferrari, Limmatstrasse 214, CH-8005 Zurich, t. +41 43 205 26 07, info@lullinferrari.com, www.lullinferrari.com
Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday 12–6pm, Saturday 11–5pm, and by appointment.