



TOUCH

An exhibition of paintings curated by Mali Morris.

Gabriel Hartley, Maisie Kendall, Gary McDonald, Mali Morris,

Laura Morrison, Risa Tsunegi and Kamini Vellodi.

April 17th - June 17th, 2007



CHELSEAFUTURESPACE



As I write this, looking up at the twilight sky of early spring in South East London, the window frames three elements - the evening star, a cloud illuminated by the setting sun, a fading vapour trail. The relative position of these three elements, light or dark against the luminous cold blue space of the sky, changes slowly. The world turns gracefully, inexorably; the wind blows high in space.

Why should this remind me of Mali Morris' eloquent introduction to this exhibition? Mali evokes another universe that existed for us, as staff and students in the Painting School at Chelsea. Work was made, positions shifted, relationships formed, paintings changed; a subtle dynamic existed, all within a fairly constant space. To complete this strained metaphor, it was often a wondrous thing to behold.

I greatly respect Mali as an artist, lecturer and colleague, and count myself fortunate to have worked at Chelsea with her. It is a pleasure - and instructive - to see these seven individual painters exhibiting together, reflecting something of that shared endeavour that existed for us all at Manresa Road.

Clyde Hopkins,
Professor and Principal Lecturer: BA Fine Art Painting, 1990 - 2006.

*“And Then I Learned Some More” **

*... So this talk, or touch if I were there,
Should work its effortless gadgetry of love,
Like Dante’s heaven, and melt into the air.*

*If it doesn’t, of course, I’ve fallen. So much is chance,
So much agility, desire, and feverish care,
As bicyclists and harpsicordists prove*

*Who only by moving can balance,
Only by balancing move. ***

We first crossed paths, all of us in this show, on the third floor at Manresa Road in the then Department of Painting, before the Big Move to Millbank. In my rosy memory, the spaces on that level flowed from studio to studio, circling the big central staircase - which was designed specifically, the architect said, for people to use as a communal place, leaning over balconies to chat, when they needed a break from the frequently solitary and silent activity of making art.

I came in to teach - along with a wonderful team of artist-tutors - and also to organize things on that third floor, usually for two days each week. Between visits, something - sometimes quite a lot - might have changed in a work, or in a space, or even in a person. I noticed this more out of the corner of my eye than in head-on looking, whilst walking through a studio on my way to somewhere else.

Of course there were tutorials, the best kind like rambling but demanding conversations, with regular glances at the work, which looked back at us. And there were the more formal, differently focused occasions, the assessments and reviews, which we all had to go through, where work was central, and scrutinized. But it was the passing-by sensations that gave me the shocks and surprises, the feeling of being stopped in my tracks by a glimpse of something new, something I would want to know more of, to grapple with, or relish. It is a strange and unusual intimacy, to witness how work is made by a person over three years, and to see how, in a way, the work makes the person.

We always knew how lucky we were, to interview all the applicants who really wanted to be at Chelsea; there were never enough places for the ones we believed should be there. For a larger showing space I could have thought of any number of the very talented students I met during my fourteen years at the College, artists who make work of all kinds, not only those who put paint on a surface. For this space, delighted to be invited by Donald to be a curator for the first time, I trusted to the instinct of remembering those peripheral views of colour and touch, of catching sight of something which seemed startling, because it was such an achievement, or so unexpected, or so beautiful.

Each of these artists makes very distinctive work. They draw on the uniqueness of their experience, their imagination, and their interests. They all make paintings, and seem to me to share other qualities, too. They counter an aliveness of surface (anything from silk-smooth to hectic) with the infinities of possibility in pictorial space (from declared pattern-flat, through the close-upness of still-life, or away into undulating, ambiguous distance). If they want to renew painting, fully aware of their time and what it asks of them, it is because they have loved and looked hard at the art of the past, as well as of the present. Each is inside painting, but in there alone, which takes nerve.

Materiality, metaphor, luminosity, vitality, curiosity, instinct and intelligence are all visible or discernible here. On my walks through the studios it was the urgent visual demand of a work which gave me the sudden jolt, a visceral feeling, regardless of the scale, physical presence, and apparent status of what caught my attention. I knew that it had probably run the gauntlet of analysis, critical consideration, and challenge, which is the way it was on that properly rigorous course at Chelsea. It had somehow, sometimes against the odds, managed to have been made.

Six memories of being stopped in my tracks seemed like a good way to think about a show. Gary, Maisie, Kamini, Laura, Gabriel and Risa, in chronological order of their studentship on the BA Course, have all allowed me that experience, and I have admired and enjoyed their work ever since. Visiting their new studios to select this recent work was a very great pleasure, and their continuing commitment and passion is inspiring.

I was asked to include my own work; turns out we all seven of us put paint on a surface, and want to construct meaning, image, space, light, with coloured pigment, through touch. I still find painting the most mysterious of disciplines, difficult, seductive, inexhaustible, and ultimately inexplicable, though God knows we are supposed to try. I think for once I won't, and just thank these six artists for agreeing to show their recent work here at Chelsea Futurespace - and also for representing the many who gave me those surprises, when I walked around a corner and was stopped short by what I saw, gave a silent cheer, or maybe a grin, and moved on.

Mali Morris, London 2007

* Jonathan Richman, in an unrecorded song heard in concert, February 2007.

** From *Machines* by Michael Donaghy, in the collection *Remembering Dances I Learned Last Night*, (Picador 2000).

Gabriel Hartley

Gabriel Hartley graduated from the BA Fine Art Course at Chelsea College of Art and Design in 2005, and is currently at the Royal Academy Schools, until 2008. He has been included in the group shows *Harvest* at Long and Ryle, *Premiums* at the Royal Academy, and *Straight Edge* at La Viande.

I have been making large paintings, painted sculptures and painted photographs, from a wide range of imagery. I have found myself drawn to, amongst other things, images of Travellers', or Hippy, clothing. I am interested in this Gap year attitude to life and to discovery, both as an experience which is highly individual and uplifting, while being seemingly clichéd and predictable... Most return claiming to have found themselves, wearing the same ponchos and baggy trousers, and if male, the obligatory beard.

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Trousers 2007, oil on canvas, 264cm x 213cm.



Maisie Kendall

Maisie Kendall lives and works in London. She graduated from Chelsea College of Art and Design in 2003 and went on to study at the Royal Academy Schools. She was awarded the Red Mansion Foundation Prize in 2005 of a residency at the Beijing Academy, China. Recent exhibitions include *Line-Up*, a Platform For Art exhibition in Piccadilly Underground Station and *Invasions Of Piquancy* at the Rove Gallery, London. She is currently the Artist in Residence at the Royal Academy Schools Gallery in Hornsey after graduating from the RA in 2006.

If painting is redemption, a rescue mission of various fragments, then mine is a process of observation, accumulation, discarding, reordering and reinvention. What develops is a continuous spacial dialogue between seemingly incongruous parts and their harmonious composure. The result being a contradiction of lightness and excess in a dilapidated modernity, a painting that is the sum of deconstruction in the guise of a monument to form.

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Many Weathers Apart 2007, acrylic and ink on canvas, 210cm x 180cm.



Gary McDonald

Gary McDonald was born in Derby in 1978. In 1998 he moved to London to take a place on the BA Fine Art Painting Course at the Manresa Road site of Chelsea College of Art and Design. Here he firmly established a love for and a commitment to painting. Some of the themes in his work and certainly a lot of the motivating influences were also nurtured whilst at Chelsea. He went on to the three year Postgraduate Diploma Course at the Royal Academy Schools where his studies continued in a self-initiated way, allowing plenty of time for work to grow naturally. He has continued to live and work in London and currently has a studio at the Gone Tomorrow Gallery Studios, of which he has been a member since their conception. He was included in the *Bloomberg Young Contemporaries* in 2004, and has shown regularly in London since then.

My paintings continue to be still-life based, taking this as a starting point to become involved in the process of applying paint. The works are informed by modes of representation, - how different techniques or colours can change the way something is perceived. There is an enjoyment in getting involved in doggedly working a problem through and a delight in the ruthless annihilation of a previous failure. The current paintings depict everyday objects that in some way I can feel a strong emotional connection to, and there is a desire to communicate some of this feeling to the viewer.

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Bunny 2005, oil on board, 81cm x 94cm.

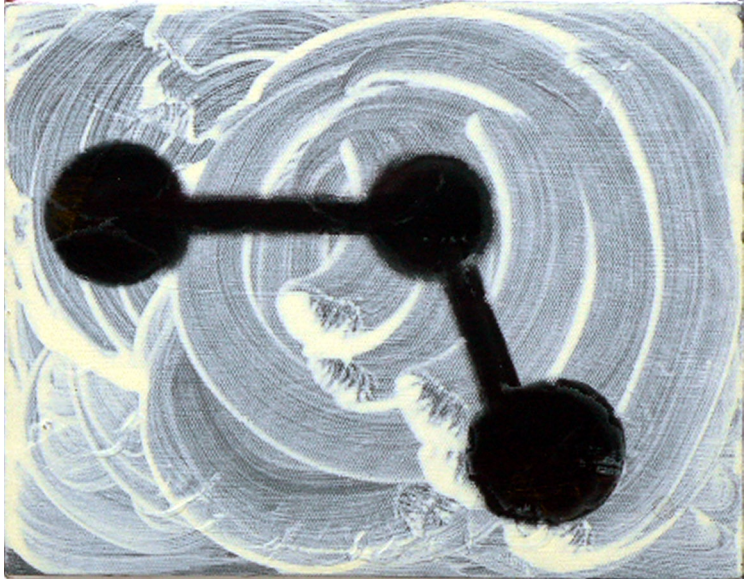


Mali Morris

Mali Morris was born in North Wales and studied Fine Art at the Universities of Newcastle upon Tyne (BA) and Reading (MFA). She has shown extensively since her first solo show at the Ikon Gallery in 1979, most recently in Tokyo, 2000, 2004, 2005, and New York, 2005 and 2007. Angel Row Gallery Nottingham organised a touring show in 2003 - 03. *Mali Morris: Work From Four Decades* was at Poussin Gallery, London, 2005, where an exhibition of new work is planned for early 2008. Her work is in private, corporate and public collections worldwide, including Arts Council England, British Council, and Contemporary Art Society. The recipient of numerous awards, scholarships and residencies, she has taught and examined in many Departments of Fine Art, including the University of Reading, Royal College of Art, Slade School of Art and Chelsea College of Art and Design, where she was a Senior Lecturer 0.5 from 1991 - 2005. Mali Morris lives in Greenwich and has a studio at APT, Creekside, Deptford.

“ ... Mali Morris’s work thrives on the production of an extremely fresh image - one that is arrested from a fluid painterly process. Her paintings are concentrated, and such is their achievement of openness that they appear to elucidate a particular kind of looking, an individual relationship with the painterly ‘thing’. ... Morton Feldman once suggested that one of the dilemmas for the artist was that of operating ‘in’ the work or ‘outside’ of it. Feldman’s own writings vividly testify to a working practice ensconced in the stuff of materiality, of feeling one’s way and thinking through it. (He) eloquently articulated abstraction itself as a process, an experience between viewer (or listener) and the artwork. It does not reside in style or approach necessarily, but in the relationship between perceiver and perceived: ‘The abstract ... is an inner process that continually appears and becomes familiar like another consciousness. The most difficult thing in an art experience is to keep intact this consciousness of the abstract.’ ... ”

From the catalogue *Mali Morris - Recent Paintings*, Angel Row Gallery, 2002, by David Ryan, artist and writer, currently Research Fellow at Chelsea College of Art and Design.



Mali Morris *Degrees of Freedom* 2005, acrylic on canvas, 36cm x 46cm.

Laura Morrison

Laura Morrison studied Foundation at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, 2000 - 2001, BA Fine Art Painting at Chelsea College of Art and Design, 2001 - 2004, and has recently completed the Postgraduate Diploma in Fine Art there. She has shown in many group shows in the last four years, and was selected for *The Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, Liverpool and London, in 2006, and *Art Futures* in 2007. She lives and works in London.

Semi-abstracts emerge as motifs in pieces that consider belief and faith on a sliding scale as well as the power granted to associated objects and rituals.

These motifs gain authority and familiarity by their recurrence and evolution from piece to piece.

The works exhibit a mysterious sincerity in combining the symbols of ancient and modern customs with gauche over-simplifications.

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Against Demonic Possession 2006, oil on MDF, 32cm x 53cm x 6cm.



Risa Tsunegi

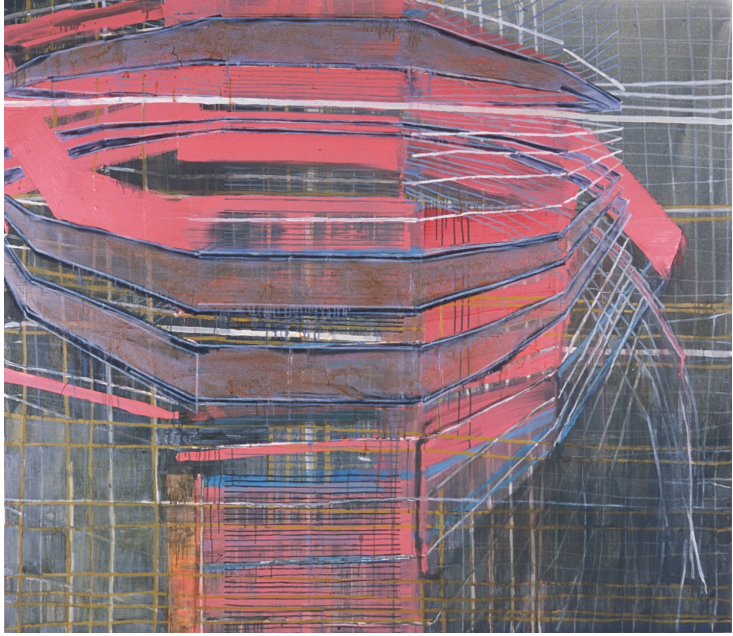
Risa Tsunegi was born in Gumma, Japan in 1982. She studied on the Foundation Course at U.C.E., Birmingham, 2002 - 2003, and on the BA Fine Art Course at Chelsea College of Art and Design, University of the Arts London from 2003 - 2006. Recent exhibitions include *Five Recent Graduates* at Art Space Gallery, London, and *Group Show* at 99 Bishopsgate, London. She currently lives and works in Japan.

I know nothing more certainly than my own sensation, and I cannot be sure of the quality of yours. Each one of us knows his own reality and that this is his integrity.

Fairfield Porter 1966 (*Art and Knowledge, Artnews, vol 4, no 10*).

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Bell 2006, oil on canvas, 165cm x 190cm.



Kamini Vellodi

Kamini Vellodi was born in Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex, 1981. She received her BA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art and Design in 2003, and her MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art in 2005. Between 2005 - 2006 she was visiting lecturer in Critical and Historical Studies at the Cambridge School of Art, Anglia Ruskin University. She is currently a research student at the Centre for Research in Modern European Philosophy, Middlesex University. Kamini has shown work in several group and solo shows in London, Vienna, and Chennai, India. Her most recent show, which she also curated, was at the Sammlung Essl Collection, Vienna, 2005 - 2006. Kamini writes for several art publications and is the art critic for *What's On In London*. Her work is held in Asia House, London, and the Sammlung Essl Collection, Vienna.

*Once upon a time a being lived without purpose or name.
Nevertheless, it was identified by a certain trait - a matted thickness of fur - by dint of which it was held accountable for its behaviour. This dense coating could extend into sinuous strands of streams and rocky edges. In the event of its amalgamation with the fur of other vestigial, and similarly subjugated beings, defiant collectives would be formed. The sole function of these anonymous movements was the effectuation of confrontational encounters with other beings.
Such is the life of a solitary mole-like creature, fugitively composing the segments of a fragmentary existence.*

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Witness To An Emerging Mole 2006, oil on board, 90cm x 150cm.





Work in progress, Mali Morris's studio, January 2007.

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Inside front cover image: Laura Morrison, *Well Worth Approaching On Their Specialist Subjects*, 2006, oil on canvas, 29cm diameter.

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