

# Inventing invention

When I think about painterly agility the recently deceased Belgian artist Raoul De Keyser immediately springs to mind. Seeing an exhibition by De Keyser one was always struck by his cunning ability to avoid repetition. Whether by line, colour, form or placement De Keyser's acrobatic compositions proposed a freedom from signature style, or indeed, stylistic progression. Each image seemed to arrive separate from their peers.

Entering Damien Flood's studio evokes a similar excitement, an encounter with a veritable fugue of artistic execution. Flood marries abstraction with representation, elegant phrases with mute absence, meaning with nonsense, questions with more questions. Colour is utilised in both harmony and discord, the image can be tantalisingly comprehensible and frustratingly unreadable.

As viewers we are pitched into a gladiatorial arena where the techniques of painting insist on their own importance while supporting their ability to offer fictional depiction. It is testament to the fluency and multilingualism of Flood's skill that in successive bodies of work he is able to keep the field of engagement so open.

Flood flips the trope in matters of scale - a large painting can be a sketch, a miniature a dense reflection on tradition and innovation. Photographs, can literally be deployed upon the picture plane to audibly argue their case for realism but their confidence interrupted and punctured by misbehaving paint and marker.

A parallel interest of the artist is creating literary fiction. The directing of personae to explore how written language itself forms and negotiates worlds. Flood collaborates with writers with whom he has built a dialogue with over a number of years, swerving to avoid the pitfalls of signature authorship. Again, the artist insists on the interrogation of a medium from more than one point of view

Damien Flood's painting can be accurately described as inventions. Perched between that word's ability to contain fantastical conceits and applied innovations. They are artifice and analysis.

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