

Tom Climent – Transmission

GOMA, Waterford, Summer 2019



Corona, oil, plaster & sand on canvas, 244×153 cm

Even before the advent of the internet, our culture was being overwhelmed by the blizzard of images - in the form of photographs, television, and advertising – that has raged since the mid- 20th century¹. Now, with the internet embedded firmly in our lives, the painting is in danger of being wholly replaced by its pixelized ghost, relegating the viewer to role of the disembodied eye². Strikingly photogenic paintings such as Tom Climent’s - for the most part large scale and suggestive of landscapes - are especially at risk of being mistaken for the experience of the work itself, their very attractiveness carrying the fear that the paintings might be a disappointment in reality. *Transmission* at GOMA allays such fears. Not only is the work at least as vibrantly coloured as the photographs suggest, they have a powerful physical presence.

The initial whack of colour that meets the visitor belies an expansive range of tone. From brilliant hues and metallic highlights through to dirty, duller shades, the handling of the tonal range is assured, especially for such large-scale works, and stands strongly against weightier areas of sand and plaster.



Aureus (detail), oil & plaster on canvas, 182×152 cm (full size)

These textured areas progress in size over the course of the show peaking with *Eden*, perhaps the most physical work. The lowering sky of textured plaster carries something of Anselm Kiefer's Germanic heaviness which Climent sets against polygons of bright colour. It is Cezanne's Mount Saint Victoire - albeit washed in Irish mist and from a point many feet above the ground



Eden (detail), oil, plaster & sand on canvas 244x183cm (full size)

Climent's use of opposing elements - the figurative and abstract, colour and texture, tone and hue, brushwork and accident - is not only skilful but the emphases along these criss-crossing lines of tension, assisted by the large scale, create the impression of a continuous shifting of perspective. This shift is complemented by the GOMA's space, its walls painted pale grey for the occasion. A rectangular aperture or a cutaway gap into the back gallery, in cropping and framing sections of work, tantalise the eye, leading it on. Following it we find ourselves down in the black bog, gazing up at a light washed summit, before hurtling upward, mountain and peatland spreading out below. One moment nose to nose with a multicoloured, patchwork escarpment, the next propelled backwards to embrace a vast panorama.



Different views..

Despite the strength of such shifts and the multiple finely tuned tensions that reverberate through the show, experiencing *Transmission* - for it is an experience - is not in any way unsettling but intensely uplifting and affirmative. Standing close, inhaling the delicious smell of turpentine and oil, being tempted to touch the rough, grainy, scratched surfaces, the metaphysical realm the painter inhabits feels near, creating a close encounter that firmly relegates any photographic facsimiles to the service of the real thing.

Tom Climent's *Transmission* was on show at GOMA in Waterford from July 11th until August 24th 2019

This piece was commissioned from Clare Scott, a Waterford-based artist and writer, by GOMA in 2019.

Notes

- (1) Hughes, R. (1991) *The Shock of the New*, 2nd Ed., London: Thames & Hudson pp. pp.325-354
- (2) O'Doherty, B., (1999), *The Eye & The Spectator in Inside the White Cube*, First University of California Press Edition, London, University of California Press.