

*this, that & the other*  
an exhibition by Karen Loader  
for Saturation Point's Sunday Salon  
15 October 2023



*Play it Again, 2023*  
acrylic on plywood panels  
100 x 60 cm & 100 x 50 cm

In 2018, following the completion of my Masters, I started using a single motif in my paintings, inspired by the architecture of Charles & Ray Eames, in particular *Case Study 8* which later became their home. I particularly liked their ethos around design and how they believed that the inside should connect to the outside and vice versa. Living in California they could achieve this more readily than we can in this country, but the idea became symbolic in my mind for how to achieve some kind of equilibrium between interior and exterior worlds, between the psychological and the physical. The motif in this instance was a cross within a square and I have used this in many ways in my paintings and drawings by repeating it, rotating it, inverting it and by shifting its size and scale to create changes in rhythm and movement.



*Gentle Murmur & Undertone*, 2019  
acrylic on plywood panel  
30 x 25 cm (each panel)

Using geometry and repetition to express psychological states of mind and feelings may seem paradoxical. There are no overt gestures in my work, it is all about inducing a rhythmic state that can be perceived by the viewer in real space and in real time. The aim is to modify the experienced patterns of place into a reconfigured order that can be staged in the temporary space of the gallery. Subsequently, things are perceived as being in a constant state of fluctuation and mutability.



*Interloper*, 2023  
acrylic on plywood panels  
100 x 50 cm & 100 x 40 cm

For this exhibition, I wanted to make a new body of work using a new motif which I call an *arc*. It is basically a rectangle with curved ends and it is painted vertically on the support with small gaps in between, its width widening or narrowing and the direction of the curve facing in or out to create changes in direction. I live in a crescent in North London and the semi-circular form is imprinted in my muscle memory. When leaving my house, I have the choice to turn left or right to get to the main road. The choice is made dependent on my destination – shops or station. I believe that these sorts of everyday actions unconsciously inspire new creative processes and outcomes.

Using a single motif is similar to the use of a symbol to express multiple ideas or concepts and its simplicity belies its underlying complexity. In this body of work, the motif acts as a metaphor for space and direction and how we locate ourselves within our environment. The motif has two faces or sides – front & back – which can be flipped to create different rhythmic variations. The repetition and the placement of the motif, one after another, allows the work to be extended in space but viewed in real time. The muted colour palette is a subjective response to observations and experiences of the built environment, but it also reflects seasonal and diurnal changes that affect how we all feel about different spaces at different times and how this generates a unique experience of place.



*Melancholy Morning, 2023*  
acrylic on plywood panel  
100 x 60 & 100 x 40 cm

The title for this exhibition was inspired by Yi-Fu Tuan's "Space & Place: The Perspective of Experience". There is one chapter in the book that looks at proximity and distance and links to my ongoing interest in phenomenology and perception, in particular the writings of Maurice Merleau-Ponty and Henri Lefebvre. Tuan writes about the language used to describe proximity and distance of an object in relation to the body and how this varies in different cultures. In English, we basically have two words to describe this. If it is near it will be referred to as 'this', if it is far away it will be referred to as 'that'. The 'other' is my contribution and comes from the idea that if something is not near or far it is somewhere in between, or so far away that it is invisible or ungraspable. This 'otherness' is something that encompasses many of the sensorial elements that I feel when moving around the city that I cannot adequately explain. It refers to the similarities and differences in the things that I experience, as well as to ideas of randomness and unpredictability, things that are beyond our control but still have a significant impact on our lives.

The processes used in the making of these paintings can be split into two categories: Firstly, there is the application of the motif onto the plywood surface which is measured and precise; secondly, there are the fluid washes of colour that are built up in many layers on top of the motifs, often with unexpected outcomes. The layers are applied with very diluted paint using large brushes with rhythmic strokes back and forth. As each layer is applied the overall effect becomes richer and more subdued. There are changes in the tints and shades of the colours from one piece to the next enabling a shift in mood. This does not come from directly mixing the colours with white or black but from layering them on dark or light backgrounds. This, together with the flatness of the motif – much less patterned than in previous work - provides a space for contemplation and stillness.



*Little Fictions, 2023*  
acrylic on wooden panels  
21 panels x 25 x 20 cm

These processes are in some way analogous to the physical and psychological outcomes that I desire. A combination of cerebral and intuitive actions that combine to make work that I still feel uncertain about but deep down know is a merging of various interests and ideas that I have been exploring over many years. The decision to present some of the works as multiples allows for variations in the choreography of the hang and the possibility to combine different pieces together. This accumulative approach leads to an intensification of experience and allows the viewer to engage with the work in a temporal and sensorial way. The overall outcome is an expression of what I personally experience, fusing perception, memory and imagination.