

The Fruitmarket Gallery

Exhibition Archive

Louise Hopkins

Freedom of Information paintings drawings 1996–2005

Exhibition 8 October — 11 December 2005

Louise Hopkins was born in Hertfordshire in 1965. She studied in Brighton and Newcastle and at Glasgow School of Art. Her work has been widely exhibited in Britain and abroad, but this present exhibition represents the first opportunity to display the full range of her practice, bringing together over 40 paintings and drawings made over the last ten years.

Hopkins rarely makes work on blank surfaces, choosing rather to work on supports which already contain information, turning that information into a painting by repainting and hence transforming it. She re-works something familiar and legible, making deliberate adjustments to the printed matter, forcing the viewer to look closely and re-consider the existing marks alongside the additions. *Liverpool Chamber of Commerce*, a small painting made on an old photograph of men making decisions, controlling information and deciding who has access to it, is unusual within the artist's practice in that it is made on such a clearly figurative support. However, it typifies her interest in the manipulation of information. The work emphasises Hopkins's ability to take charge of the narrative and conceptual elements as well as the visual material contained in a support, interrogating the marks on the surface through a primarily painterly process. By swirling paint around the speaking figure and two of his colleagues, Hopkins claims for herself the space in which their words circulate, transforming the photograph by taking control of it.

Hopkins often works on supports designed specifically to communicate information. She diverts and subverts the information printed in newspapers, on maps, in history books and on street plans. These works constantly shift between the formal and the conceptual, the viewer

enjoying the painting while trying to work out exactly what has been done to the support. When Hopkins works with maps, for example, she is undeterred by the privileged relationship to reality they claim. In *World Map* she overpaints everything except the sea in a blue exactly the same colour as the sea. She retraces the lines of longitude and latitude, the place names and all the land, remapping the world in order to wipe it off the map. The result is disorientating; a functional object has been transformed into a densely complex surface. A similar process is at work in *Europe Map (3)* and *Europe Map (Green)*, although instead of mere colour, the agent of destruction this time is virtuoso freehand painting, the artist painting an approximation of generic land over the seas to delete everything except the actual land. She joins the land masses of Europe one to another, rendering the maps hard to decipher though actually no less useful – all of the landmarks, literally, are still there, and if you were able to navigate by *Europe Map (3)*'s road and rail map of Europe before Hopkins got to it, you should theoretically still be able to.

Some supports are even more abruptly silenced. Hopkins has made several works on sheet music. In some, she mixes paint the same colour white as the paper and carefully repainting all the notational marks – notes and words – makes an elegant, ghostly echo of the original. In others, she blacks out particular elements of the music, or physically scratches them out, the extent to which she is concerned with obliteration and erasure more apparent, the savagery of this impulse not far beneath the now much less conventionally beautiful surface. Hopkins first came to prominence with a sequence of work made on commercially-available furnishing fabric. These works are shown again in this present exhibition, together with *Untitled (282)* and *Untitled (239)* from 1998

and 1999, and two very recent works, made especially for this exhibition and marking a return to working on furnishing fabric after a period spent working on paper supports. The works on furnishing fabric chart a quest for an appropriate indexical procedure, an attempt to find in the fabric itself the right mark with which to engage with it. In the early work, and in one of the newest ones, the artist repaints areas of the pattern exactly, annihilating through reduplication. In the series from 1999, she smothers the pattern with elements of itself, finding a black mark within the design that she then repeats all over it, turning it into a dense, impenetrable surface. In the large new work, exact repainting is further complicated – the leaves are repainted, and then the mark used to repaint them is used also to define and lay claim to the space between them. Using only what is there in the printed pattern, the artist radically alters and redirects each section of fabric, rendering the impersonal, machine-made designs oddly and intimately compelling, both in the areas on which she has worked and in those she has left untouched. The surface of the fabric becomes charged by her activity, spread out across it and across time with slow deliberation.

The social aspect of the information contained within the supports with which she chooses to work is not lost on the artist. Part of the appeal of working on supports with pre-existing marks lies in the process of coming to terms with what those marks originally meant and what they may mean once the artist has tackled them. Furnishing fabric, for example, brings with it a particular set of baggage, to do with social aspiration, class and the desire for individual expression. Hopkins' paintings seek to control and redirect the flow of that register of social information as much as the more purely visual data contained in the elaborately floral or figurative designs.

Hopkins's work is often beautiful. It presents itself first and foremost as a sensuous, painterly practice, to be savoured slowly and appreciated for its skill and care. However, the primary impulse behind the artist's activity is rarely one of embellishment, but is more often harsh and disruptive, a drive to disorientate both the system of information on which her gaze falls and the viewer's response to it. In its consistent variety, hers is a practice which engages as it repels, revealing the process of making marks on a surface to be as much about defacement as it is about decoration.

A substantial catalogue has been published to accompany this exhibition, with essays, with essays by Fiona Bradley, Greg Hilty and Ulrich Loock. Available from the bookshop £14.95



Louise Hopkins has produced an exclusive print on the occasion of this exhibition. Available from the bookshop £150 framed, £100 unframed.

Talks and Events

Making Art: Children's Workshop

Saturday 15 October, 11am–1pm.

Tickets £4 per child. 10 places available. Booking essential.

Suitable for 7–11year olds.

Family Workshop

Saturday 15 October, 2–4pm.

Tickets £4 per child. Booking essential

Suitable for children age 3–6 accompanied by one parent/guardian.

Adult Workshop: Experimental Drawing

Sunday 30 October, 11am–4pm.

Tickets £7/£5 conc. Booking essential.

Artist Anna Ray leads a workshop using materials such as furnishing fabric, books, music sheets and maps.

Conversations on Contemporary Painting

Thursday 3 November, 6.30pm. Free.

A discussion examining current developments in contemporary painting with Susanna Beaumont, Director, doggerfisher and journalist Moira Jeffrey.

Unbound: Visual Arts Publishing Forum

Saturday 19 November, 2–6pm.

Tickets £10/£7 conc. Booking essential.

A forum offering a timely discussion on independent art book publishing in Scotland with presentations by artists, writers, galleries and publishers including Book Works (London), Revolver (Frankfurt), The Scottish Book Trust and The Fruitmarket Gallery.

To book for all talks and events, contact **the bookshop**

P 0131 226 8181 **E** bookshop@fruitmarket.co.uk

For a full list of all events pick up an Events Calendar

Opt in For Art is The Fruitmarket Gallery's

two-year programme of work for schools

and youth groups. Informal visits including assistance with transport, tailored activities and a resource pack. Contact

Johnny Gailey, Opt in For Art Co-ordinator

P 0131 226 8186

E optinforart@fruitmarket.co.uk

Reading Room

Resource material and an exhibition interpretation film presentation of Louise Hopkins discussing the work in the exhibition is available in the gallery reading room. The exhibition DVD is available from the bookshop priced £15.

Gallery Information Assistants will be on hand daily for

impromptu tours and to answer any questions.

We welcome group bookings from colleges, universities and

community groups. These must be booked two weeks in advance

of your visit. For further information or to book a group tour contact Tracy Morgan, Education Manager

P 0131 226 8183

E education@fruitmarket.co.uk

Access and Location

The Fruitmarket Gallery is an accessible venue with a lift to

the upper gallery. Centrally situated behind Edinburgh

Waverly Rail Station, the Gallery is close to major bus routes on the Royal Mile, North Bridge, Waverly Bridge and Princes Street.

Exhibition supporter

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Louise Hopkins
Photos: Alan Dimmick