

PRESS RELEASE

BOO SAVILLE POLYCEPHALY

16 October - 15 November 2014

TJ Boulting is delighted to present a new solo show of British artist Boo Saville. The title of the show 'Polycephaly' refers to a condition derived from the Greek words for 'many headed,' which in turn refers to Saville's current practice. For several years she has perhaps been better known for her intense monochrome biro drawings of subject matter that explores existence, archaeology, myth, philosophy and science. For her previous solo show two years ago, she began to develop her ideas within a seemingly opposite medium, that of abstract colour fields. This show for the first time combines her two working mediums, that of the monochrome figurative and that of the colour abstract and explores what unites the two visually disparate sides of her practice as belonging to one artist.

Interspersed in the gallery are black and white figurative paintings amongst the bright colourful abstract colour fields. The black and white paintings reflect her solid thoughts and are of subjects taken from photographs in old books and the internet. These paintings are the natural progression in subject and technique from her biro drawings, they harness the detail and labour previously involved in the drawing, as well as the literal depiction of subject matters that fascinate her. These include a polycephalic skull, an empty nest and a cross-section of a dissected head.

The colour fields describe for her a purely emotional relationship, working intuitively to produce resounding depths and tones of colours in layer upon layer of oil. However through these seemingly different approaches, a common thread is found, as she alternates the abstract and figurative ideas to discuss the symbolic order within a framework of abstraction. "I am interested in painting as a way to discuss philosophy. The nest suggests the potential of an idea, the home of thought but also sadness and loss. The double-headed calf the embodiment of this idea.

I approached the work through making instinctive choices whether that be colour or of images. I have become more interested in instinct as the way we make the choices in our lives. People often say when they meet me that they expected me to

be a very dark and morbid person but I am not at all. I wanted to expand and reflect that in my work, and work on things depending on how I was feeling.”

The manipulation of the paint also describes the different engagements she has with thoughts. The thin, eked-out black and white oils in the figurative works encapsulate a different cognitive process to that of the rich and layered colour, akin to either academic or emotional, conscious or subconscious; the id and ego of the artist, where the instinctive use of colour and ego is the conscious choice of subject and its meticulous reproduction. As she explains further: “I hope the two different groups of work explore how we experience consciousness. Sometimes the images have a clear indication to its meaning, sometimes the meaning and relevance is less clear. I am interested in the questions rising from these relationships.”

As one moves between the figurative and the abstract, Saville invites us to explore the way we read images, almost as an experiment in instinct, to whether we use the right or left side of the brain to rationalise what we see or respond more viscerally. The more one moves between the two entities the more it appears that both can evoke responses, and that images are the signifiers which help inform the abstractions, and mood and emotion can be conveyed similarly through both, and that for Saville sometimes the most melancholy emotion can be expressed through a subject matter put through the filter of her detailed brushstrokes, and positive emotion can be expressed instinctively through colour.