

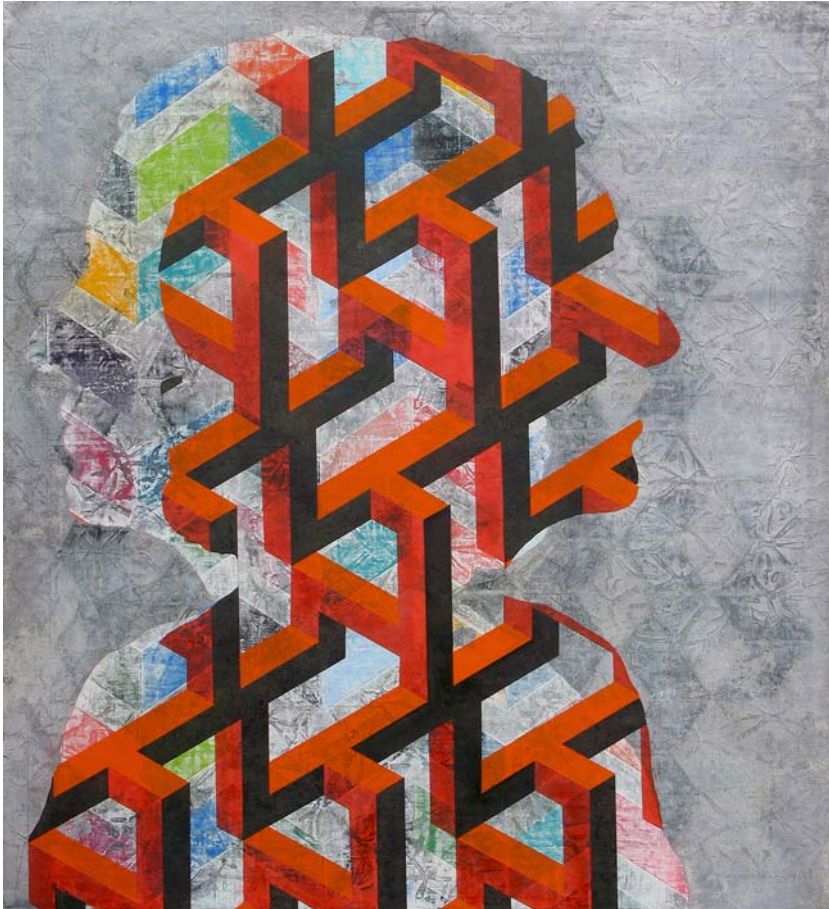


JAMES FISHER
Doppelgänger



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JAMES FISHER : *Doppelgänger*



Fabrication – in the sense both of making things and making things up – produces enigmatic and mysterious pictures with which to think. My current paintings are like ghost schema, assemblages of images and surfaces that generate spectral encounters. My paintings don't instantly give themselves up, but reveal themselves gradually as part of these encounters. They appear veiled from the viewer, as if seen through a screen.

The cats and other animals that have appeared in recent images are a broad reference to Thomas Gainsborough's *The Painter's Daughters with a Cat*. In the painting Mary is depicted sitting behind Margaret with her right arm draped over her younger sister's shoulder. They inhabit a kind of painterly landscape, or are positioned in front of a theatrical backdrop that represents a landscape. A Naples Yellow radiance emerges from behind Mary's head and also describes her left sleeve. The girls appear to be made of the same stuff as the landscape. The dry, skittish brushstrokes of their clothing are the same as those in the clouds – or are they trees? Only their faces are drawn into focus, knowable and pale, youthfully rouged. The picture is cast in an ochre glow from the bare linen frequently exposed between and beneath the paint.

The two girls stare out from the canvas at their father. As the viewer, we are located in the same position where Gainsborough observed his daughters. So now Mary and Margaret gaze at us. The National Gallery catalogue entry for *The Painter's Daughters with a Cat* describes the painting as unfinished. This is probably because the girls' faces are rendered more distinctly than in the rest of the picture, or because large patches of the canvas cloth remain untouched.



But of course the painting is finished. This is its lingering state. *The Painter's Daughters with a Cat* is fixed in a perpetually provisional condition.

The inconclusiveness of Gainsborough's painting leaves a door ajar. As Mary and Margaret pore over us, they implore us to complete them. But this invitation is only partly answered by the viewer. The open door lets the other in. It lets in leeway and the margins, just as television sets admit apparitions in *Ringu* and *Poltergeist*. In *The Painter's Daughters with a Cat*, the cat is let in.

We can barely see the cat. It is faintly delineated in black. It is transparent, inaudibly yowling and coiled on Mary's left arm. Mary and Margaret do not seem to know that the cat is there. Perhaps it isn't there yet. It is latent in the paint. Gainsborough has made the cat arise from the same cloth as Mary's dress, the same cloth of the painting's ground.

The cat appears unbidden, spontaneously. Its attendance in the picture invokes a kind of spirit ally for the girls. This is an encounter with a creaturely familiar. The familiar cat is coming to help Gainsborough's daughters consummate the painting. It is coming for us too.

The Painter's Daughters with a Cat has led me to think about animal/human, and human/object relationships in terms of fabrication, about how animals enjoy access to a sphere of being that is unfamiliar to us – they wander off – and about how our relationships with the objects we make and use are prescribed by routine – the routine of making tea, or of making a model kit, for example, or of making a painting.



My colleague, Dr Richard Allen says about this: “Maybe this is why humans enjoy looking at art, as a way of encountering creaturely life, something in a state of existence withdrawn from consciousness, holding the capacity to be both unsettling and reassuring. It could also be why humans like to keep pets such as cats. Pets, like art works, are familiars that are close to the orbits of our own lives whilst always maintaining an unknowable presence, existing in their own, imperceptible, ‘cat time’.”

The way in which I make the paintings is strongly influenced by Ukiyo-e Japanese woodblock printing. This is evident in the areas of flat translucent colour laid in layers over textured surfaces to build images. References to Japanese lacquer work and textiles are made through decorative and metallic inlays within the painting surfaces.

I have also been considering how biography can be worked with as another form of fabrication in terms of myth making and telling stories about our selves. My paintings are titled with reference to biography and enable me in particular to explore the lives of notable – forgotten – women. By using the names of (often ghostly) characters – from folklore or comics, for example – I am also able to conflate biography with fiction: making things with making things up.

JAMES FISHER 2016

Passages of this text were originally given by Richard Allen and James Fisher as part of *Ghost Train: Fabrication and the making of Mysterious Objects* at the University of Worcester on 25 November 2015.





Catalogue

2. Eiko 2016
oil on linen, 95 × 90 cm
4. Okiku 2014
oil on linen, 100 × 91 cm
6. Kear 2015
oil on linen, 100 × 91 cm
8. Neko 2016
oil on linen, 50 × 45 cm
10. Aphra Behn 2016
oil and retroreflective sheeting on aluminium panel
30 cm diameter
11. Thomas Bernhard 2016
oil on panel, 76 × 70 cm
12. Althea R 2016
oil on linen, 81 × 71 cm

JAMES FISHER

- 1972 born UK
1992–95 University of Brighton
1995–97 Royal College of Art, London
2006–9 PhD Fine Art, University of Gloucestershire

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2005 *The Wanderer* Rochester City Art Gallery, Rochester
and other recollections Eagle Gallery, London
2008 *I came here a stranger* Eagle Gallery, London
As a stranger I depart Campden Gallery, Chipping Campden
2009 *My Hopes are not Entirely Hopeless* Aldeburgh Music, Suffolk
2010 *A Quiet Companion* Campden Gallery, Chipping Campden
2011 *Uchiwa-e* Eagle Gallery, London
2012 *A Quiet Companion* Campden Gallery, Chipping Campden
2015 *Lies & Camouflage* with Denise de Cordova, LAF 2015 Project
2016 *Doppelgänger* Eagle Gallery, London

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2003 *20 x 5* Eagle Gallery, London
2004 *Rose Pavilion Interior (with muf architecture/art)*
5ème Biennale d'Art Contemporain Enghien les Bains, France
2005 *Conscious Fiction* Eagle Gallery, London
Ex Roma APT Gallery, London
Fokelore APT Gallery, London
2006 *Cartoon Collage and The Decorative Motif* Eagle Gallery, London
Campden Gallery, Chipping Campden
Disrupted Narratives Eagle Gallery, London
The Worcester Pilgrim Project Worcester Cathedral
2007 *From Elsewhere* Campden Gallery, Chipping Campden
Cities and Eyes Aldeburgh Music 2007, Peter Pears Gallery, Aldeburgh
Enchanted Eagle Gallery, London
Baroque Eagle Gallery, London
2008 *Exchange* Paul Kane Gallery, Dublin
London Original Print Fair, Royal Academy – Eagle Gallery
Royal Academy Summer Exhibition
2009 Northern Print Biennale, Newcastle
2010 London Original Print Fair, Royal Academy – Eagle Gallery
2010 Royal Academy Summer Exhibition – invited artist
Memory's Images Eagle Gallery, London
Discerning Eye Mall Galleries, London
Then and Now Eagle Gallery, London
2011 *BITE* Mall Galleries, London

- 2012 *Generations* Arch 402, London
Royal Academy Summer Exhibition
2013 *Panel Paintings* Eagle Gallery, London
Ceramics, Paintings and Prints Mall Galleries, London
2014 *Enclosures, Elsewhere* Lion and Lamb, London (curator)
Some of my Colours Eagle Gallery, London
Memory's Images Eagle Gallery, London
Garden Campden Gallery, Chipping Campden
Panel Paintings 2 Eagle Gallery, London
2015 *Neiland's Choice* GX Gallery, London
Summer Mix Turps Gallery, London
Building, Dwelling, Thinking Eagle Gallery, London
Unfolding the Archive National College of Art and Design Gallery, Dublin
Unfolding the Archive F.E. McWilliam Gallery and Studio, Banbridge, County Down
2016 *Orpheus Ascending* Eagle Gallery, London

AWARDS

- 1995 Travel Award, East Sussex County Council
1996 Artist in Residence, The University of Calgary, Canada
2001 Abbey Scholarship in Painting, The British School in Rome
2002–6 Acme Live/Work Programme, Sugar House Studios, London

COLLECTIONS


Fidelity Investments, London; Jerwood Foundation, London; The Hive, Worcester Co. Council

PUBLICATIONS

- Encountering St Ippolyts* published Eagle Gallery/EMH Arts, London 2005
Etching and letterpress folio published by Eagle Gallery / EMH Arts
The Invisible City published Eagle Gallery / EMH Arts, London 2007 ISBN 978-0-9554046-3-4
I came here a stranger, as a stranger I depart – Martin Holman
published Eagle Gallery / EMH Arts and Campden Gallery 2008 ISBN 978-0-9554046-7-2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Sue Hubbard: *20 x 5 Drawings*, *The Independent*, 4 November 2003
Corinna Lotz: *Conscious Fiction*, *Galleries Magazine*, January 2005
Sue Hubbard: *Conscious Fiction*, *The Independent*, 17 January 2005
and other recollections Eagle Gallery, London 2005
The Pilgrimage Books published artworks 2006
Emma Hill: *In Pilgrims' Footsteps*, *Printmaking Today*, winter issue 2006
From Elsewhere Campden Gallery, Chipping Campden 2007
Aidan Dunne, *The Irish Times*, 9 April 2008
Aldeburgh Music 2009 Festival Programme
Blake Hall: *Aldeburgh Festival*, *Galleries Magazine*, June 2009
Richard Cork: *Royal Academy Illustrated 2010* ISBN 978-1-90511-87-1
A Quiet Companion Campden Gallery, Chipping Campden 2010
Uchiwa-e Eagle Gallery, London 2011



Published June 2016 on the
occasion of James Fisher's
exhibition *Doppelgänger*
Eagle Gallery, London

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Text © 2016 James Fisher
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Typeset in 9.5/14pt and 8/10pt
FF Quadraat Regular

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