

IVY SMITH

PAINTINGS & DRAWINGS

Opening Night: Thursday 5th May, 7-10pm
Open: Sat, Sun, Mon 11am - 6pm or by appointment
Closing (last day): Monday 23rd May



Netball Match - Goal Area, 2014, oil on canvas

Mercer Chance is proud to present an exhibition of paintings and drawings by acclaimed Norfolk artist Ivy Smith.

Bridging the gap between observation of nature and abstract design, Ivy's work seeks a happy resolution between the particular and the formal.

We are struck by the natural vitality of the figures, their movement, sense of weight and shifting momentum, yet they also appear frozen in a cool light of stillness, clarity and consideration. At times figures seem to coalesce into arrangements as formally rhythmic

and deliberate as David's *Horatii*, only then to spring into action, leaping or lunging across the floor, absorbed in their activity and unaware of the viewer.

The paintings present themselves all at once in a single perception, owing to their subtly flattened space, formalised composition, balance of colour and unified, 'all-over' feel. Yet they also captivate and reward sustained attention; the superb level of draughtsmanship in both line and form, nuances of gesture, personality and relations between figures become increasingly apparent as our eye travels joyfully over the canvas.

The figures are understood in three dimensions, with an utterly convincing sense of sculptural form, yet the restrained brushwork and linearity of their drawing means one is ever conscious of their fitting into a scheme of flat shapes. This, combined with the holistic treatment of colours which remain modest, almost chalky, recalls early Spencer, or even *trecento* fresco painters like Giotto.

The observational drawings which precede the paintings demonstrate an exquisite balance between line and form, ease and rigour, which echoes Degas and Ingres. The beautiful qualities and expressive possibilities of line are indulged, but edges never become outlines; they are subtle and yielding contours which allow us to feel around the form. Tone is thoughtfully and gently deployed to describe the fall of light and fullness of the figures without disturbing the delicacy and poise of their linear conception.

About the Artist

Ivy Smith studied painting and printmaking at Chelsea (1965-7) and the Royal Academy (1967-70).

She has won numerous awards and is highly regarded as a portrait artist, whilst making ambitious multi-figure compositions for public and private commission and exploring her own interests in landscape, leisure and society. She works predominantly through drawing, oil painting and linocut printmaking.

She has taught at Norwich School of Art (75-94), City College, Norwich (95-04) and the Royal Drawing School, London (2001-present).

www.ivysmith.co.uk

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