

## **Helen Shaddock; Coloured Matter**

Here Gallery, 108 Stokes Croft

Bristol

BS1 3RU

Helen Shaddock's work is exuberant and life enhancing; it allows us (the viewers) to re-experience the pleasures of colour, texture and form which have shaped our experience of the world from our childhood years; all human beings seem to respond to the seduction of these.

Her processes are at least as important as the finished works and crucially, Shaddock has recently relinquished overall control of these processes by adopting a more experimental approach which embraces the possibility of "unknown" outcomes.

Shaddock has long been intrigued by imagery of stripes/strata both man made and natural ranging from bar codes to rock strata and mapping information. Her most recent work indicates a more open ended kind of communication with an audience, by that I mean it has a more polysemic meaning; multiple readings; ranging from the beauty of the everyday to more metaphoric readings about allusions to subjects beyond the obvious visual evidence. This is evidenced by a greater sense of freedom, more spontaneity, a freshness and excitement in the processes and their outcomes for the artist. These range from the process of pouring coloured plaster into moulds, allowing colours to blend, separate, splash or coalesce as their nature and materiality dictates; to drawings where colour samples of plaster and pigment are carefully noted and measurements of each recorded. Strategy controlled, outcomes uncontrolled.

References to the history of process based art in the late C20th and into this century, is paralleled by a much less theoretical, more intuitive response to colour and form in Shaddock's work which refers back to the Abstract Expressionists (and their heirs) free use of colour, eg Barnett Newman, Morris Louis, Helen Frankenthaler, to contemporary approaches in drawing where, despite an obsessive attention to structure, detail and process, unpredicted outcomes come together.

In a famous interview, Richard Serra said "Anything you can project as expressive in terms of drawing-ideas, metaphors, emotions, language structures-results from the act of doing". Drawing had become allied to minimalist sculpture as well as process art. Shaddock's tower-like objects seem to relate to both minimalist sculpture and process art yet indefinably relate strongly to her drawing practice and perhaps could be described in some way as three dimensional "drawings in space".

Importantly, Shaddock's work has resonance beyond her man made/geographical iconography and also indicates an interest in human behaviour and the mind; how we make connections between how we think and how we might make visual representations of our "world view" that may be idiosyncratic but is the right of every artist.

Many artists in recent years have moved away from the strait-jackets of conceptualism, post-structuralism and critical theory in an effort to re-assert both the independence of the artist from theory and the primacy of the act of drawing and making. The inherent subjectivity of the artist's relationship to the world and response to it has become increasingly important in this distancing virtual world.

Helen Shaddock's work asserts the importance of the hand of the artist, both in drawing and making; it is wholly life-affirming and allows us to remember and share in the individual human being's response to the world with a sense of joy and wonder.

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