

Press Release

NOTHING FIXED

Alice Browne/Varda Caivano / Christopher Green/Howard Hodgkin/Ralph Hunter-Menzies/Raoul de Keyser/Shawn McDowell/Wendy McLean

6th – 17th September 2011 (Private View: Tuesday, 6th September, 6 - 8.30pm) at The Gallery in Redchurch Street, 50 Redchurch Street, Shoreditch, London E2 7DP, Tel: 0207 729 4949 (during the run of the exhibition only) or 07971 580 572

Marcelle Joseph Projects is delighted to present *Nothing Fixed*, an exhibition of abstract painting curated by artist Shaun McDowell and featuring work from eight artists, Alice Browne, Varda Caivano, Raoul de Keyser, Christopher Green, Howard Hodgkin, Ralph Hunter-Menzies, Shaun McDowell and Wendy McLean. Shaun McDowell has named the show *Nothing Fixed* as he is interested in works that have movement and life but do not attempt to portray recognisable objects or figures. In his own words, McDowell has selected “works that begin and do not necessarily end, are open, finished but not fixed.”

Movement and energy are two words that describe **Alice Browne's** practice very well as she works with colour, texture and volume in an unpredictable way. Browne often works quickly on many paintings at a time, “allowing the brush shape and consistency of the paint to affect the mark making, resulting in a fresh, rhythmic energy.” Browne's approach to her work is a painterly exploration of colour and form that references everyday visual experience as well as abstract notions of depth relating to the flat painting surface, creating a palpable but playful tension in her work. Browne, a London-based artist, has been very busy since she finished her BA in Painting at the Wimbledon College of Art in 2009. After being selected for the New Contemporaries show in 2010, Browne was included in a group show curated by Ryan Gander earlier this year at the Limoncello Gallery in London as well as being selected by Dexter Dalwood, a 2010 Turner Prize nominee, to exhibit at the Creekside Open 2011 at the APT Gallery in London. She has upcoming solo shows this year at the Jerwood Project Space in London and again at the Limoncello Gallery. Browne's practice, which lies somewhere in the spectrum between abstract and representational, reflects on an interest in perceived differences between a world of objects and their representations.

Varda Caivano, an Italian citizen born in Argentina, has lived and worked in London since 2000. After finishing her MA in Painting at the Royal College of Art in 2004, Varda has moved from strength to strength. Her work is currently featured in the *British Art Show 7: In the Days of the Comet* at the Glasgow Centre for Contemporary Art after the show toured through Nottingham and the Hayward Gallery in London earlier this year. This past summer, Varda undertook a residency at the British School in Rome, which culminated in a group show there. Varda's 2009 *Untitled* work on display in this exhibition is an elusive work which is emblematic of the fundamental uncertainty of what abstract painting is all about. Modest in size, this canvas is densely layered with different marks of colour - both lines and blobs - in a palette of blues, greens and pinks and portrays a sense of space and depth through these layers. This quilt-like layered effect is visually stimulating but leaves the viewer unsettled at the same time though its constant juxtaposition between colour and line. This is testament to Varda's adept use of paint on canvas. Her dense abstract mark making may exhaust the viewer with the canvas's patches of overworked paint but her work is filled with doubt and vulnerability. Varda makes each of her works over a period of time as marks and ideas build up and develop in relationship to one another. Varda says “My paintings are built on layers, they are thoughts or monologues, moments that grow over time – it is as if the studio is a body or head, a symbolic and physical place.”

Christopher Green, an artist based in Plymouth in Devon, has produced a series of new paintings for this show that reference two works from a family of 30 paintings, collectively entitled *Between Together and Afar*, that he made for his third solo show at the Hannah Barry Gallery in London in 2010. Green says, “Upon consideration of the older works, new ideas and exchanges between the past (works) and the

present (life) open-up and create further possibilities. They share the same genetics but are worked on without a regard for 'a whole' or in accordance to a singular, fixed statement." Green's new body of work combines uncertainty and calculation in equal measures as can be seen by his diptych works included in the *Nothing Fixed* show. A larger monochromatic canvas is positioned to the right of a smaller more whimsically abstract painting on the left. It is almost as if the right and left side of Green's brain have been laid out in reverse for the viewer to gaze upon, juxtaposing the rational orderliness of the monochromatic canvas with the dreamy spontaneity of the smaller canvas, spontaneous in the artist's use of colour, line, shape and medium. These works were made with acrylic, gesso and graphite, among other materials. Green says, "A degree of uncertainty is maintained at all times; during the making of, and upon the work's settlement." Green's ideology of possibility fits in perfectly with McDowell's premise for the show and allows his paintings to grow into covetable "jewels" with their own unique identity.

Howard Hodgkin needs no introduction as he is one of the most important artists working in Britain today. Hodgkin was awarded the Turner Prize in 1985 and later knighted by the Queen in 1992. In 2006, Tate Britain staged the first exhibition to span the entire career of Howard Hodgkin after his work had been exhibited at museums around the world before that time. Hodgkin emerged as a major figure in British art in the 1970's with his expressionistic abstract style, adopting the wooden panel and frame and defining painting as object. From the 1990's to the present, Hodgkin's work has become looser and more gestural after a slightly representational period in the 1980's. His work in *Nothing Fixed* combines both the painted-on wooden frame and loose, gestural brush marks. Hodgkin has named this work *Technicolor* although his palette of reds and blues is quite restrained. However, the way Hodgkin introduces these colours to each other in frantic zigzagged wavelengths of pure colour that flow onto the wooden frame makes *Technicolour* fresh, alive and unsettled. Binding together all of his work is his consistent exploration of the representation of personal experiences, emotional encounters and memories of specific events, albeit obscured by a layering of the picture surface with distinct marks and intense colours, often achieved over a period of several years. Hodgkin's picture on show was done over a two-year period from 2009 to 2010.

Ralph Hunter-Menzies is the youngest artist in the show having studied both his Foundation Diploma and BA Fine Arts degree at the Chelsea College of Art & Design in London, where he graduated in 2010. Ralph has created new works for this show that, in his own words, "focus on the isolation of a single movement an artist would make." This process enables him to explore the surface he works on in a highly energetic and spontaneous way. His attitude and relationship to the surface he paints affects the outcome of each piece. Ralph has recently moved from making monochromatic paintings to experimenting with a more idiosyncratic palette, creating tension through different and exciting colour combinations. Ralph finds it important to his practice to be spontaneous with his aesthetic choices in order to keep his intensity genuine.

Raoul de Keyser, a Belgian artist born in 1930, paints highly personal works that hover between abstraction and reality. De Keyser has had a quiet but masterful presence in the contemporary art world since 1965 and has been an inspiration for generations of European painters. He has been championed by fellow Flemish painter, Luc Tuymans, and had his first major survey in the UK at the Whitechapel Gallery in 2004 after an important painting survey in Vienna in 1993 and being included in Document 9 (Kassel, 1992). The roots of his work lie in both Pop Art and Minimalism but his carefully crafted compositions are always abstract even though inspired by subjects close to home. De Keyser's works have an air of elegant simplicity but at the same time they trigger a surprisingly emotional response due to Raoul's strenuous employment of pure colour, line and space.

Shaun McDowell's paintings are fine examples of the unresolved nature of abstract painting. His new acrylic on board paintings on display in this exhibition are part of a series that Shaun recently completed in his studio without the use of a nude model or oil sticks, his trademark practice in the past. McDowell has used a paintbrush for the first time in three years to create works that are jammed full of staccato,

gestural marks and a palette of vibrant colour. Not having a live model in the studio has caused his works in this show to lose the areas of washed-out background colour from his earlier works, confronting the viewer with unadulterated intense colour and energetic mark making. The effect often feels violent and fraught with tension but the finished paintings are objects of utter beauty. Shaun's work was shown to critical acclaim at a group show at the Parasol Unit in 2009-2010, exhibiting alongside Cecily Brown, Katy Moran and Maaike Schoorel, and he had his second solo show at the Hannah Barry Gallery earlier this year. What is most striking about Shaun's paintings is his original and daring use of colour. The gestural choices he makes in the abstract marks made by him on his boards only add more depth and mystery to his work.

Wendy McLean, another London-based artist, graduated from the Royal College of Art with an MA in Painting earlier this year. Her work focuses on the different values paint can project. McLean states: "I am interested in painting's ability to insinuate objects, open up pictorial space, and cite conventions, yet remain just a surface of coinciding marks." When first meeting McLean, she was unsure about being described as an abstract painter as the starting point for her practice is always a model built by her or a landscape study drawn by her. In fact, her studies look like exquisite finely tuned works of art. However, although working from a fixed point of reference, her finished paintings are lyrically loose in feeling with some brushstrokes vaguely reminiscent of a landscape but the overall effect blurs the line between abstraction and landscape painting and allows the viewer's mind to wander out of the landscape and wonder what the artist was thinking about during her creation process. Some of McLean's more overworked board paintings scream abstraction and are crying out to distance themselves from any fixed statement or reference point, and for that reason, give them an intriguing complexity and etherealness.

Note to Editors

Founded in 2011, Marcelle Joseph Projects is a roving contemporary art projects company devoted to promoting contemporary art in different venues or found spaces across the United Kingdom. The core activity of this commercial venture is to showcase contemporary work of emerging to mid-career international artists who work in a variety of media. Marcelle Joseph Projects will mount five exhibitions in 2011. For more information, go to www.marcellejoseph.com.

Visitor Information

Gallery opening hours: Tuesday-Saturday 11am-6pm; Sunday 11am-4pm; or by appointment. The Gallery in Redchurch Street is located at 50 Redchurch Street, E2. Situated off Shoreditch High Street to the west and Brick Lane to the east, it is easily accessible by all forms of public transport, with Liverpool Street and Old Street stations being a ten minute walk or Shoreditch High Street station only a one minute walk.