



ZARA MATTHEWS
Chambre

*And now good-morrow to our waking soules,
Which watch not one another out of feare;
For love, all love of other sights controules,
And makes one little roome, an every where.*

JOHN DONNE : The Good-Morrow

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...an empty shell, like an empty nest, invites day-dreams of refuge.

GASTON BACHELARD : The Poetics of Space



Room, Tauxigny 2009 photograph

A room in a converted chapel is visited by a woman on a journey back through northern France. She arrives in the dark. As dawn breaks the intimate harmony of walls and furniture, the window with its iron handle that looks out onto an old village barn, the heavy armoire, the lamps and gilded mirror all reveal themselves, cautiously, like shadows emerging from the fog of a dream. Paintings suggest stories, other worlds. Like mirrors they reveal many possibilities.

Chambre: the French word is like a breath, a whisper. The room is a world that time has forgotten; a world redolent with other lives that have passed through and left their marks like pale ghosts. It is as if the woman has always known this place; has, in some sense, returned home. In the short time that is left before departure she absorbs this faded interior as the light slowly changes: the blue glass bowl and Wedgewood plaques on the mantelpiece beside the brass candle stick, the ultramarine bed sheet tangled after a night of sleeplessness, the blueness of which, in the pearly dawn, glows like the Madonna's robes in a *quattrocento* painting, a time when lapis lazuli from the distant mountainous mines of Afghanistan was more precious than gold. It is as if each object has slipped from fact to dream and acts as a trigger into the remembrance of things lost and past.

The room draws her in. Instinctively she recognises it, for, like Virginia Woolf who spoke in her famous Girton lecture about the importance of women having a space to work and dream, she understands its significance. It is a place to think, to be entirely herself, however briefly, away from the demands of daily life; a place of reverie and primal safety. For artists such as Van Gogh and Gwen John the rooms they inhabited, the rooms they painted, represented not only freedom from bourgeois constraints but also

became metaphors of their souls, their psychic core as artists. Gwen John's empty wicker chair in her little attic reflects her sense of loneliness that was to become the spur to her creative impulse, just as the empty bed in Zara Matthews' paintings, becomes the catalyst for a whole new series of work.

Set out in the shape of the actual room the paintings form a conversation each with the other. Objects that occur in one canvas are echoed like a continuing thought in the next. Time is the predominant element which ties these works together, as in Monet's *Haystacks* or *Rouen Cathedral* series. The deep blues and greens seen in the early first light are later saturated by the morning sun to become pink and gold. That these paintings grew from photographs is no coincidence. The Latin term, *camera obscura*, means a darkened chamber or room. To take photographs is to engage with the passing of time. For when the camera shutter closes it traps each moment, as in aspic, so that it can never be truly revisited except through nostalgia.

Longing and desire are among the most profound human urges. They form the theme of much great literature and art: Rilke's poetry, Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu* and that quintessential French novel of yearning, Alain-Fournier's *Le Grand Meaulnes*, while the Impressionists understood, as no other painters, the impossibility of fixing a single moment in time within the constant flux and shimmer of light. Here, in these haunting, meticulously rendered paintings, Zara Matthews creates a series of epiphanal moments, dialogues between colour, tone and shade, light and dark, photography and painting. *La chambre* becomes a place of refuge, a shelter, a womb into which the artist retreats to re-nourish the creative imagination in order to reach out and create new dreams. ~ Sue Hubbard 2011



Still Light 2011, oil on linen, 50 × 60 cm



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OVERLEAF

Annunciation 2011

1. *Surfacing*
oil on linen, 55 × 45 cm
2. *Still Light*
oil on linen, 50 × 60 cm
3. *Untitled I*
oil on linen, 65 × 85 cm
4. *Untitled II*
oil on linen, 30 × 40 cm
5. *Untitled III*
oil on linen, 30 × 40 cm
6. *Untitled IV*
oil on linen, 46 × 61 cm
7. *Untitled V*
oil on linen, 80 × 120 cm
8. *Untitled VI*
oil on linen, 30 × 40 cm
9. *Untitled VII*
oil on linen 66 × 56 cm



Inner and Outer World 2011, oil on linen, 125 × 165 cm



Spaces In-between 2011, oil on linen, 65 × 90 cm



Mirror Image 2010, oil on linen, 67 × 100 cm

ZARA MATTHEWS



Landing 2010, oil on linen, 46 × 61 cm

1980–83 Kingston Polytechnic – BA (Hons) Fine Art Painting
1997–99 Royal College of Art, London – MA Fine Art Printmaking

SOLO SHOWS

1991 *Artist of the Day* Flowers East, London – selected by Eileen Agar
1992 *Zara Matthews Recent Paintings* Eagle Gallery, London
1996 *Chromosome Series – Complete Set* Eagle Gallery, London
Terra Nova Harewood House, Leeds
2001 *Fold* Eagle Gallery, London
2003 *Conception* Eagle Gallery, London
Genome Institute of Child Health, London; commissioned by The Progress Educational Trust; supported by The Wellcome Trust, The Elephant Trust, The Moose Foundation and The Holst Foundation
2004 *State of Play* Kunst 2004 Zurich – Galerie Kämpf
2011 *Chambre* Eagle Gallery, London

SELECTED GROUP SHOWS

1990 *Academicians Choice* – selected by Eileen Agar
1991 *12 Artists* Eagle Gallery, London
South Bank Picture Show Royal Festival Hall, London
1992/95 *Contemporary Art Society* Smiths Gallery, London
1993 *The Critics' Choice* Christie's, London – selected by Andrew Lambirth
Pacesetters Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery
Three Painters Eagle Gallery, London
1997 *British Contemporary Artists* Smiths Galleries, London
Contemporaries IV/Abstract Eagle Gallery, London
1998 *Renaissance Art Awards* OXO Tower, London
1999 *The Show* Royal College of Art, London
Panoramic Royal College of Art Print Portfolio, Eagle Gallery, London
2000 *Frankfurt Art Fair* – Eagle Gallery, London
The Art of the Pixel Clifford Chance, London
The Discerning Eye Mall Galleries, London [also 2002, 2006, 2008]
2001 *Small is Beautiful* Flowers East, London
2002 *Drawing for All 2002* Gainsborough's House, Suffolk – prizewinner
2003 *Realism* Flowers East, London
Grenzenlos/Boundless Galerie Kämpf, Basel
Ex Press Royal College of Art, London

- 2004 Galerie Pia-Anna Borner, Lucerne
 2006 *Art Madrid* Salón de Arte Moderno y Contemporáneo, Madrid – Eagle Gallery
Sensory Material Bonhams, London
Bridge Art Fair Miami – Jaggedart, London
Paare Galerie Pia-Anna Borner, Lucerne
 2008 *Exchange Dublin/London* Paul Kane Gallery, Dublin
Eagle Gallery Artists: Part One Eagle Gallery, London
Lynn Painter-Stainers Prize The Painters' Hall, London
Autobiography Flowers East, London
Small is Beautiful: Love Flowers East, London
 2009 *East End Academy – The Painting Edition* Whitechapel Art Gallery, London
Small is Beautiful: Nursery Rhymes Flowers East, London
 2010 *London Original Print Fair* – Royal Academy of Arts, Eagle Gallery
Wall of Light Standpoint Gallery, London
Interior Spaces Eagle Gallery, London
Multiplied Christie's, London – Eagle Gallery

AWARDS, COMPETITIONS, PUBLICATIONS

- 2002 *On Growth and Form* Wellcome Trust Commission, in collaboration with the School of Communications, Royal College of Art; Royal Academy of Music; and Royal Academy of Art, London
 Video by Zara Matthews / music composition by Tansy Davies
 2004 *Patterning* BMIC Cutting Edge Tour, Brighton
 2006 *Genome* Boxed set of 23 archival inkjet prints published in association with EMH Arts Publications

COLLECTIONS

Aylesford Newsprint Collection; The British Museum; DLA Art Collection; Electra Partners; Quod, London; The Royal College of Art, London; Victoria and Albert Museum; LHPW Print Collection

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY

- 1991 *Artist of the Day* Flowers East catalogue
 1992 Andrew Lambirth, Preview, *Galleries Magazine*, December
Royal Academy Magazine, Number 37, Winter
 Robin Dutt, *City Limits*, 24 December
 Charles Hall, Critics Choice, *The Guardian*, 12 December

- 1992 Mel Gooding, Eagle Gallery exhibition publication
 1993 *Pacesetters* Peterborough Museum and Art Gallery catalogue
The Critics' Choice Christie's catalogue
 1996 *Royal Academy Magazine*, Number 51, Summer
Rivista di Neuroradiologia, Volume 9, Number 5, October
 Andrew Lambirth, Pick of the Week, *What's On* magazine, 20–27 March
Evening Standard Magazine, Hottest Ticket, 23 February
 Pat Laycock, Chimera and Chromosomes, *Yorkshire Post*
 1999 *The Show* Royal College of Art catalogue
 Review Section, *The Independent*, 31 May
The Sunday Times Lifestyle Magazine, 18 July
 Pick of the Week, *What's On* magazine, 28 May–4 June
 2000 *The Discerning Eye* Mall Galleries catalogue
 Sue Hubbard, *The DLA Collection* catalogue
The Art of the Pixel Clifford Chance catalogue
 2002 *Encore, East Anglian Times*, 9 September
Drawing For All 2002 catalogue
 2003 Edward Lucie Smith, *Realism* Flowers East catalogue
 Andrew Clements, On Growth and Form, *The Guardian*, 8 July
On Growth and Form Progress Educational Trust and Almeida Opera
 2004 Kunst 2004 Zurich catalogue
 2006 *Monoprinting* A&C Black
 2008 Aidan Dunne, *The Irish Times*, 9 April
The Discerning Eye Mall Galleries catalogue
 Sue Hubbard, Paintings brimming with art and soul, *The Independent*, 29 December
 2009 *East End Academy – The Painting Edition* Whitechapel Art Gallery catalogue
 Andrew Lambirth, Whitechapel Trio, *The Spectator*, 8 August
 Martin Coomer, Quiet London, *Time Out*, August
 Anne Reimers, Ringen um Jeden Strich, *Faz.Net-Kunstmarkt*, 3 August
 2010 Antennae, *Galleries Magazine*, issue 321, 10 April
 London Original Print Fair catalogue
 2011 Sue Hubbard, *Chambre* Eagle Gallery catalogue



The Nursery Door 2009, oil on linen, 18 × 23 cm

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