

Attracted by the expressive power of shape and colours, Alex Dordoy started off painting in an abstract fashion. In tune with the Glasgow art scene, which could be characterized in Dordoy's own words by a predominant 'lo-fi formalism with minimalist overtones,' he nonetheless soon turned to figuration. This was less a change in principles than a consequence of his steadily increasing need to allow a broader range of meaning back into the work. Having learned a lot from abstract painting in terms of formal and procedural ways of putting paint together, he found something equivalent to an expressive brush-mark in the human figure and more particularly in the cowboy character. The lone-some individual stood for a nostalgic idea of the painter as a pioneer of the spirit and to put them together on the same surface made sense.

Yet, Dordoy is not tied to one specific subject matter; the motif is a tool to give prominence to paint itself. Lately he has been broadening his range of motifs to scientists, knights, alchemical symbols, and has also come to use snatches of history painting (Velázquez) as well as text to compose images. Elaborating his compositions thanks to a variety of different techniques, Dordoy's paintings are highly poetic mechanisms through which depth and movement appear as a result of their layering. Dordoy's way of painting is always at once active and highly controlled. As if caught in the middle of an action, the characters who figure in his work appear as if frozen in paint. They act in what will remain a series of mysterious tales.

Alex Dordoy (1985) is an English painter who lives and works in Glasgow.

Why did you choose the Glasgow School of Art to study?

High school was where the impulse to make art was nurtured. I was lucky to have a really encouraging art department. I went to school in Newcastle, and there is a strong link between my school and the Glasgow School of Art. I also knew a few people from years above that had gone. That link, along with an ambivalence about going to Uni in London (the main alternative) lead me to Glasgow.

Who was your supervisor? Did (s)he have a specific influence on your work?

At GSA you have a number of different tutors throughout your time. In my final year Alex Pollard was really instructive. There isn't a direct link between my work and his - he makes pseudo-conceptual playful sculptures - but he was very good at opening what I was doing up to wider influences, for example encouraging me to read Nietzsche and look at Friedrich. I think this moved my work on to a place where the physicality of the paint became a far more central and unruly protagonist.

Does your work relate in some way to the art tradition in Glasgow?

Without generalising too much, Glasgow as an art scene at the moment is defined by a "frag" aesthetic. By frag I mean a lo-fi formalism, usually sculptural and with post-minimal overtones, made of cheap and rough materials brought into ambiguous spatial relationships. I am thinking of artists like Cathy Wilkes and Karla Black. That isn't to say there aren't painters out there - Tony Swain and Richard Wright, for example, both of whom I love - but on the whole I think that as a painter in Glasgow, especially a figurative painter, you are doing something a little different from a lot of what is around locally - though of course that difference helps create a dialogue (both locally and on a more global scale) and that is the whole point in making work.

Your work seems to relate to the history of film and more particularly to the Western genre. Why is it? Could there also be a broader relation between your way of painting and the will to create a cinematic effect? I'm speaking here for instance about the kind of works you've been recently making such as *These Thousand Hills*, by which the viewer is lead to create a

narrative on the basis of looking at the four sides of the pyramid simultaneously.

For me the cowboy thing was useful at a particular point in my practice as a means of reintroducing content to the work. I had made a series of abstract paintings, which, although I feel I learned a lot from in terms of formal and procedural ways of putting paint together, never really satisfied me. I needed a device to allow a broader range of meaning back into the work, and the cowboy as signifier was an appropriate metaphor for a nostalgic idea of the painter as an individual, as a pioneer of the spirit. The cowboy as image signified something equivalent to an expressive brush-mark, so putting them together on the same surface seemed to make sense. While this was useful for me, I feel I have now moved on from the cowboys to a place where a much broader range of content is allowed into the work. I think it's important not to be tied to one thing. I've recently been painting scientists, knights, alchemical symbols, and using snatches of history painting (Velázquez) as well as text to compose an image. Despite this widening of source material, I feel the way I use it on the surface of the painting is consistent and is related to this notion of 'cinematic effect.' I have never thought of my work in quite this term before... and I am thinking through it as I write, but it does seem appropriate. Perhaps for two main reasons: the first is an idea of arrested narrative, like in a film still. I am always drawn to source material of people doing things - caught in the middle of an action - and the way I paint is always at once active and highly controlled - so there is always a feeling of an event taking place, though the full extent of this event (context and narrative) is always denied to the viewer. I like the idea that the painting suggests but does not dictate. Second, cinema relies on the idea of montage, of images appearing in succession to create meaning. When I'm painting I often think in these terms, but rather than images appearing one after the other they appear one on top of the other, as (not necessarily related) additive layers on the surface. In this sense, the way I paint is similar to collage.

Name a few things that have influenced your work (from the history of art, film history and culture in general)?

influences... to all that has been mentioned above, I would add, in no particular order: Stanley Kubrick's films, George Orwell's 1984, the work of Rene Daniels, Wilhelm Sasnal, Thomas Zipp and Isa Genzken, encyclopaedias, adverts in

the back of old National Geographics, Sartre, JG Ballard, Mel Gibson...

Could you describe the evolution of your work?

I think questions 3 and 4 give some insight into how the work is moving on. With painting I see the way it is progressing toward a place of openness; by which I mean a place where it seems almost any image, complete or cropped and distorted (but always selected,) could float in or out of the surface of the painting. I want the work to become more spontaneous and varied – even dream like – like a stream of conscious regurgitation of the multitudes of experience around me.

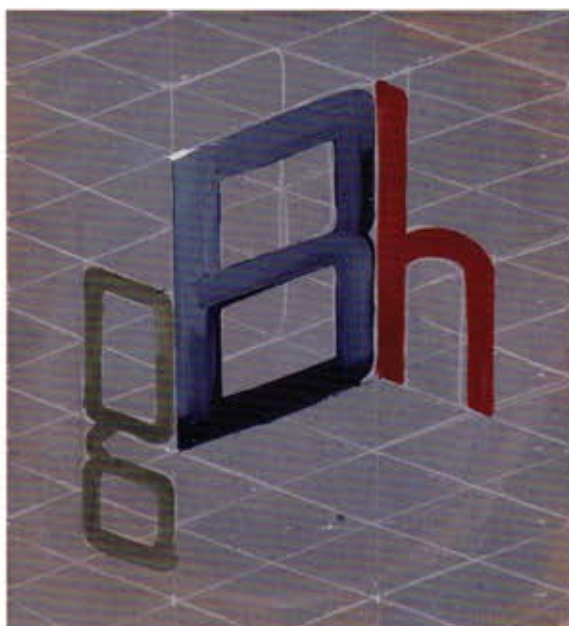
As well as this I also want to open my practice up to other forms of making... I am currently working on a collaborative video with the artist Rose Ruane. This will be based on an odd mix of a Western and a Samuel Beckett play and will be shown in Glasgow in July. I also am making a large sculpture of an uptimed wagon for a show in Edinburgh in October... I think it is really important to test what you can make, especially at this early stage of my career.

What does making art stand for?

Art? I think it is about communication, specifically the communication of some form of extra-linguistic effect. I know poetry is something of an unfashionable word, but I feel that no matter what the work – from the driest conceptualism to dirtiest painting – art always resonates on an emotive level.



NULL, 2008
oil and pencil on canvas, 20 x 26 cm



GBH, 2008
oil and pencil on canvas, 42 x 39 cm



COLLISION OF STEEL AND GLASS, 2008
oil on board, 40 x 38 cm