

eye of the blackbird

Stephen Lee

Maria Chevska

11 February ~ 5 March 2011

Opening Night

with readings of poems related to the exhibition
Thurs, 10 February 2011, 6-9pm

Gallery Talk

Stephen Lee & Maria Chevska in Conversation
Weds, 2nd March 2011, 7-9pm

Tank

The Ladywell Tavern, 80 Ladywell Road SE13 7HS

(Frequent rail services to nearby Ladywell Station from Charing Cross, London Bridge and Waterloo East)

Open Wed-Fri, 5-6pm; Sat & Sun, 1-6pm

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Landscape and painting, expanded in terms of materiality and metaphor is the point of departure for this collaborative exhibition over two floors in an old carriage house in South London. The country and the city are thematically inter-woven in an elaborate upstairs/ downstairs dialogue.

Maria Chevska's painted cobblestones displayed in the ground floor gallery refer to the materiality of the street. Retrieved from just below the surface of the road, these slightly subterranean objects have considerable gravity as paintings. The painted stripes on the surface of the stones are records of palettes used on her main body of paintings. The cobblestones therefore act as a storage or file-code of colours. They also form a direct connection between the art produced in the studio and the urban landscape.

The title, *eye of the blackbird*, is a fragment of a poem by Wallace Stevens that provides the common ground of modernism, language and materiality for the collaboration. The poem is described by Maria Chevska thus: 'I enjoy the poem's proposal of ordering the world and its sensations (Art), even if compressed into haiku-like form which amongst all its other qualities contains humour'.

The upstairs gallery houses Stephen Lee's juxtapositions of *Plein-Air* landscape painting of countryside with sculpted animals, human forms and objects. Characterised by a feeling of light, air and space, the work has the structural appearance of a poem of objects, clustered across continuous shelving.

Closely tied to literary qualities of narrative and time, intrinsic to landscape, Lee describes his choice of subject matter: 'I am particularly interested in places where human activity and objects interact with the surrounding environment to create a heightened sense of time as metaphor. This could be for example, a group of people fishing and picnicking by a river, a train-line, canal or motorway connecting to the city like a vein or a post-industrial zone, which has been partly re-absorbed into surrounding fields like a ruin'.



No title, 2010, oil paint on cobbles, Maria Chevska



Landscape with Train, spliced photograph, 2010; *Installation detail*, mixed media with cardboard, 2010, Stephen Lee



Work in progress, acrylic and tar on paper, 2010, Stephen Lee



Installation view, chairs, painted cobblestones, oil paint on linen, 2010, Maria Chevska