

Maria Chevska

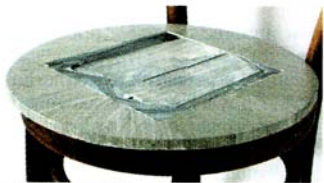


Mummery+Schnelle

Soho to Hampstead

Maria Chevska makes art about the boundaries between the written, the painted and the real. Hers is a tactile world of edges and cusps to be broached with pleasure but interpreted with caution. The first thing you notice is that colour floods a robust but reserved aesthetic. Brushloads of luscious oil paint are applied to configurations of abutting planes, but always buried beneath is raised text – dribbled words and phrases borrowed from literature or snippets of overheard conversations – that replicate a snappy, incomplete, essentially urban experience.

Actual objects further complicate the paintings. Pushed to the wall beneath one canvas is a Gerrit Rietveld Zig Zag chair. Wrapped in a blanket another chair reads like a crouching figure, while the seat of a third holds a painting of cursory architecture or perhaps an open book. Nothing in this context is



'Head Over Heels and Away', oil on chair

functional – objects and images flutter between materiality and metaphor, awaiting clarification. It never comes. Like the snatched conversations from which she cribs, Chevska's work is necessarily open to question. With evident humour, she's called the show 'Free and Easy' – a nod to the fact that the simplest of set-ups can sometimes leave the viewer with the most work to do. It's a risky strategy. If you aren't convinced by the aesthetic you probably won't hang around long enough to derive your own meanings. Becoming ever more seductive, however, Chevska's art buys itself time to work its unusual magic. *Martin Coomer*