andré stitt
living in the material world
The gallery is pleased to present ‘Living in the Material World’, a major solo exhibition by artist André Stitt.

The gallery has represented Stitt since 2013, with his art not only becoming a staple in the gallery’s exhibitions, but also in the collections of many of our clients. To the gallery’s audience, his name is synonymous with abstraction, copious paint (with a clear love for the material) and a certain fervent energy permeating from each work exhibited.

This, Stitt’s second solo exhibition at the gallery, sees a clear and concise body of work which feels like a definite and defining point in his practice. Inevitably, comparisons are drawn between Stitt’s 2014 exhibition ‘Dark Matter’ which, at first glance, seem worlds apart. Dominant throughout ‘Dark Matter’ was the prominent use of thick oil paint on canvas, layered and punctured with clusters of repeated circular motifs, the form of which suggested atoms, molecules and galaxies. ‘Living in the Material World’ feels - quite literally - lighter, flatter, with transparent planes of angular architectural themes.

But, scratch a little deeper, and the change is not so dramatic.

Stitt’s practice moves at a quick pace, with Stitt prone to comment ‘I’ve moved on from this’ when viewing his work on the gallery wall. This is testament to his astonishing work ethic alongside the practical implications of using such quantities of oil paint, which ask an unavoidably long drying time. Visually, the development can be traced through artworks produced since his 2014 show. This timeline of progress through Stitt’s recent practice reveals a significant turning point - the shift from canvas to wood panel and from his use of oil to acrylic paint. The switch in his choice of paint has resulted in a quicker way of working, allowing for thinner application, thus creating depth through multiple translucent layers. The synthetic qualities of acrylic paint also lends itself to the emergence of a new theme in Stitt’s work - his personal interest in brutalist architecture and the ‘new future’ of post world war society. Hinting at man-made materials and Formica finishes, the synthetic is celebrated through more contemporary substances - free from the heavy traditions of oil and canvas - fitting for the futuristic optimism of the era. Tinged with a dystopian air, the concrete structures and forgotten public art of the time are used here by Stitt as another catalyst for his overarching philosophy - as did the suggested molecules of ‘Dark Matter’. That is, the realization, understanding and exploration of the impact the world around us has on ourselves - the seen and unseen; from the atom to the galaxy; the past-present-future all jumbled and inseparable; the tangible and abstract.

Stitt presents us with images that are simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar and, propelled by his enduring love of paint, beckons us to look through the layers of the painted surface.

Cat Gardiner, gallery director.
Theme From The Regular Shape of Forever acrylic on canvas, 190 x 300cm, 2016
Synthetic Model For A Post-Capitalist Economy In A Parallel Universe
mixed media painting installation, 2015-16
I have recently been investigating how painting can be experienced as an ‘extended’ practice through installed groups and configurations. The current focus of this work is an exploration of modernist architectural legacies as a visionary utopian embodiment of progressive civic, municipal and social engineering.

The work draws upon the materiality of the built environment and its abstract displacement through art as a memory of forms reimagined as a parallel universe. In proposing a simulacrum I wish to question our received notion of authenticity in a world constructed through imperial economies of power that contribute to national/cultural/post-colonial identity made manifest through art and architecture.

The ambition is for work that may create a sense of recognition counter balanced by a sense of timelessness, loss, longing, disconnection and melancholy.

In so doing I wish to make paintings that seem to arrive as if from another time and place; a potential dissident space where all era’s co-exist.

Here I also reference the work of Philip K. Dick and his use of a future-present utopian/dystopian binary as a means for dismantling our perception of ‘reality’.

Specifically sited art was viewed as an important contribution to a new civic and municipal environment at a local and national level in post-war Britain. In these groups of paintings I reference the mural work of John Tunnard at the Festival of Britain, the concrete relief work by William Mitchell on housing blocks and civic centre’s such as in the new town of Cwmbran and Victor Pasmore’s brutalist concrete Apollo Pavilion in the new town of Peterlee in order to explore the legacies of art and architecture as a modern/futuristic vision for social progress.

The civic centre of the new town of Craigavon in Northern Ireland is aligned with Victor Pasmore’s ‘Apollo Pavilion’ in the new town of Peterlee in England. William Mitchell’s postwar concretopia becomes the lost dream of the cosmic soviet and a territorial memory of teenage years in Cwmbran.

Monumental state sponsored ‘Spomenick’ sculptures become places of forgetting rather than places of remembering.

An embodied memory has an essential role as the basis of remembering a space or place. We transfer all cities and towns we have visited, all places we have recognised into the incarnate memory of our body.²

The architecture of the military bunker is transposed, reconfigured and positioned as quasi-monumental edifice.¹

The municipal centres of the lost new towns of Britain are celebrated through utopian memorials for a future that didn’t arrive.

Social housing residents committees appropriate public sculpture as testimony for a nostalgia of repression.

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Memory, recall, and embodied experiences are employed to interrogate issues of politi-
cal, economic and devotional power, sys-
temic corruption, utopian ideologies, and the architecture of neo-human control in a cha-
otic universe. This often reveals itself as a
searching out of small elusive moments and
unconscious dilemmas that may implicate us
in a larger communal, collective or cosmo-
logical narrative.

Paint is utilised as a synthetic transmitter of
experience that reflects the historical uncer-
tainty of time and place proposing contem-
porary genre painting as a transformative
medium with redemptive potential. As such, I see my painting occupying a limi-
ted space that might be defined as ambigu-
ous or ‘atemporal’ abstraction. A position
that is not static or fixed but part of a net-
work where all eras co-exist.

I position my own painting here where it can
be produced without an agenda based on a
received meaning of a style.

Philip Kindred Dick (1928 –1982) was an American
writer, whose published works mainly belong to the
gene of Science Fiction. Dick explored philosophical,
sociological and political themes in novels with plots
dominated by monopolistic corporations, authoritar-
ian governments, and altered states of conscious-
ness. In his later works, Dick’s thematic focus tended
to reflect his personal interest in metaphysics and
theology.

4 John Samuel Tunnard (1900 –1971) was an English
modernist painter and designer. From the mid-1930s,
began to paint abstract works influenced and
later embraced British surrealism. His works featured
architectural and biomorphic forms combined with
elements of constructivism. He was commissioned
to produce a large wall mural to the Festival of Britain
Regatta restaurant.

5 William Mitchell (born 1925) is an English sculp-
tor, artist and designer. He is best known for his
large-scale concrete murals and public works of art
from the 1960s and 1970s. His work is often of an
abstract or stylised nature. His use of heavily mod-
ed surfaces created a distinctive language for his
predominantly concrete and glass reinforced con-
crete sculptures. After long years of neglect, many
of William Mitchell’s remaining works in the United
Kingdom are now being recognised for their artistic
merit and contemporary historic value, and have
been granted protective and listed status.

6 Following the passing of the 1946 New Towns’ Act
Cwmbran was established as a new town in 1949 to
provide new employment opportunities in the south
Wales. The longest established employer in Cwmbran is bis-
cuit maker Burton’s Foods who employ 1000 people
to make its Jammie Dodgers and Wagon Wheel bis-
cuits. As of 2005, the Cwmbran plant produces over
400 million Wagon Wheels a year.

7 Victor Pasmore (1908 –1998) was a British art-
ist and architect. He pioneered the development of
abstract art in Britain in the 1940s and 1950s.
In 1950, he was commissioned to design an abstract
mural for a bus depot in Kingston upon Thames and
the following year Pasmore contributed a mural to
the Festival of Britain that promoted a number of the
British Constructivists.

Pasmore’s choices in this area proved controversial;
the centerpiece of the town design became an ab-
stract public sculpture structure of his design, the
Apollo Pavilion. He represented Britain at the 1961 Viennese
was participating artist at the Documenta II 1959 in
Kassel, Germany and was a trustee of the Tate Gallery,
donating a number of works to the collection.

8 Atemporality or timelessness is manifested in paint-
 ing through the reanimating of historical styles or by
recreating a contemporary version of them, sampling
motifs from across a timeline of 20th-century art in
a single painting or across an oeuvre, or by radically
paring down an artistic language to its most basic
archetypal form.
Beyond the Horizon acrylic on wood panel, 120x120cm, 2016

Come Tomorrow acrylic on wood panel, 120x120cm, 2016
Out Here, Temple Rock acrylic on wood panel, 90x150cm, 2016

A Parallel Life acrylic on wood panel, 90x150cm, 2016
Theme From the Kingdom acrylic on wood panel, 61x61cm, 2016

The Rebuilding of the Great Snowdonia Spaceport acrylic on wood panel, 62x92cm, 2016
Theme From the Seminary acrylic on wood panel, 61x91cm, 2016

Theme From the Ministry of Defence acrylic on wood panel, 61x91cm, 2016
Road-Block  acrylic on wood panel, 50x50cm, 2016
If You Were Still Around  acrylic on wood panel, 50x50cm, 2016
Seymour Hill I acrylic on wood panel, 51x51cm, 2016

Seymour Hill II acrylic on wood panel, 51x41cm, 2016
**Decoy** acrylic on wood panel, 90x150cm, 2016

**House of the Engineer** acrylic on wood panel, 63x92cm, 2016
Autumn In The Commune  Diptych (2 x panels) acrylic on wood panel, 92x61cm, 2016

Sighting  acrylic and enamel spray paint on wood panel, 50x75cm, 2015
Flyover acrylic on wood panel, 60x50cm, 2016

Shuttle (Memories of Cold Mornings) acrylic on wood panel, 40x40cm, 2016
High-Rise Dawn acrylic on wood panel, 60x60cm, 2016

Capsule acrylic on wood panel, 60x60cm, 2016
High Rise On The Horizontal acrylic on wood panels, 71x41 cm, 2016

Thaw Over Hollow Concourse I & II acrylic on wood panel 2 x 40x40cm 2016
Refuge acrylic on wood panel, 41x51cm, 2016

Extracts From a Continuous Construction
sanded oil paint, acrylic and pencil on wood panel, 51x51cm, 2016
Harmony Heights  sanded oil paint, and acrylic on wood panel, 40x40cm, 2016

Breakfast Bar (Bomb)  acrylic, enamel and expanded foam on 4 x wood panels,102x92cm, 2016
Synthetic Model For A Post-Capitalist Economy In A Parallel Universe
mixed media painting installation 2015-16
Civics limited edition box of 50 unique drawings, edition of 5 boxes 2015

Harmony Heights pencil on paper, 21x30cm 2016
The Rosiland Protocol I pencil and acrylic on card 21x30cm 2016

The Rosiland Protocol II pencil and acrylic on card 21x30cm 2016
Quiet Nights III pencil and oil on paper, 21x30cm, 2016

Snowdonia Spaceport pencil and oil on paper, 21x30cm, 2016
Phenomenal transparency in architecture implies a subtle and complex notion of literal transparency. Literal transparency offers simple and direct communication with no sense of presence. Whereas phenomenal transparency is similar to that found in cubist paintings whereby we are introduced to a simultaneous perception of different spatial locations. In applying these concerns to architecture, space not only recedes it also fluctuates in a continuous activity. Colin Rowe suggests there is a “continuous dialectic between fact and implication. The reality of deep space is constantly opposed to the inference of shallow space; and by means of the resultant tension, reading after reading is enforced.” (Rowe 1955-56)

My own work alludes to a condition of phenomenal transparency as a continuous dialogue between lived experience of the built environment, memory, fact and implication. Phenomenal transparency is used as a subjective interface (metaphorically, performatively and emotionally) that combines memory with phenomenal experience of time and place. This conditional experience has a relationship to a common contemporary preoccupation with disjointed or transparent temporalities through notions of haunting or ‘hauntology’ (Derrida 1993). The idea that popular culture has always drawn on a sense of nostalgia is ubiquitous however, we now live in an era of elision where the near-entirety of our cultures’ pasts can be accessed, excavated and made available in an instant.

coda: terms of reference
We experience visual culture as slippage, elision and as transparent membrane whereby our interface with the visual world has been totally altered by the virtual and the screen; images are flat, backlit, transitional and rapid. This acts as a form of phenomenal transparency whereby we inhabit a virtual space for collection, download and post-production (Bourriaud) that promotes a sense of atemporality as a common state of being. Our presence is haunted by memory (real and fictional); by being neither present nor absent, dead or alive.

It is here that my recent extended painting practice exists in a constant state of atemporality with the working process experienced as a state of phenomenal transparency. It is also here I suggest that we are haunted by the spaces we thought we inhabited, in a future that looks like the past which now looks like the future which looks like the built environments that held our utopias: always present, always absent and always always.


visual research : image key

[18] Booklet page 36, Expo 70, Osaka, Japan.
[37] Case Study house no. 22, Los Angeles, 1959-60.
[38] Stitt, wall drawings, Kodapress Studio, Grangetown, Cardiff, 2014.
[41] Spomenik, Kosmaj, former Yugoslavia, circa 1970’s.

[46] Architects drawing for the rebuilding of the great hall, Coleg Harlech, Theatr Arduwy, 196
[48] SumoTomo Group Pavilion, Expo 70, Osaka, Japan.
Studio: Monument I & II acrylic on canvas, 190 x 300cm, 2015
andré stitt

b. Belfast, Northern Ireland 1958

1976-1980 Belfast School of Art, Ulster University, Northern Ireland

Working almost exclusively as a performance and interdisciplinary artist from 1976-2008 André Stitt gained an international reputation for cutting edge, provocative and politically challenging work. A predominant theme in his artistic output was that of communities and their dissolution often relating to trauma, and civil conflict, advocating art as a redemptive proposition. During this period his ‘live’ performance and installation works were presented at major museums, galleries, festivals, alternative spaces, artist-run collectives and sites specific throughout the world.

In 2008 he was awarded a major Creative Wales Award to develop his work and has since changed the focus of his art practice to painting. In 2015 he was awarded another major Arts Council of Wales Creative Wales Award to further investigate painting in relationship to installation art.

ONE PERSON EXHIBITIONS

2014 DARK MATTER, gallery/ten, Cardiff
2013 IN THE WEST, Leeds College of Art Gallery
2012 PROG.VOL.2, Warning Contemporary Art, Belfast
2010 EVERYBODY KNOWS THIS IS NOWHERE, Howard Gardners Gallery, Cardiff
2009 SHIFTWORK, The Lab, New York
2008 SUBSTANCE, Spacex, Exeter, England
2005 RECLAMATION, Chapter, Cardiff
2004 CARGO CULT, CGP Gallery, London
2003 SOUTH OF NO NORTH, Sirius Arts Centre, Cobh, Ireland
2001 HOMEWORK, Le Lieu Centre en Art Actuel, Quebec
2000 HOMEWORK, Howard Gardners Gallery, Cardiff
1999 LEARNING TO FLY, Michael Wilson Gallery, London
1997 DOMESTIC SCENES, Michael Wilson Gallery, London
1993 AKSHUNARTIFAX, Arts Council Gallery, Belfast
1990 MINI RETRO, De Media, Eeklo, Belgium
1985 SNUFF, Lantaren-Venster Gallery, Rotterdam, Holland

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2016 BEEP PAINTING BIENNALE, Swansea, Wales
2016 NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD OF WALES, Abergevenny, Wales
2016 ORIEL DAVIES OPEN, Newtown, Wales
2015 STREETWORKS, Streetlevel Art Gallery, Ireland
2015 GRIFFIN OPEN, Griffin Gallery, London
2014 MOBILE ENCOUNTERS, Irish Museum of Modern Art, Dublin
2013 NEW WELSH ART, gallery/ten, Cardiff
2013 BEEP PAINTING BIENNALE, Swansea, Wales
2012 ART OF THE TROUBLES, Ulster Museum, Belfast
2012 ORIEL DAVIES OPEN, Newtown, Wales
2007 JOHN MOORES 2012, Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool
2007 NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD OF WALES, Glamorgan, Wales
2007 SHELTER, Oriel Mostyn, Llandudno, Wales
2006 DEATH AND DADA, Galerie Lehtinen, Berlin
1999 NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD OF WALES, Abergevenny, Wales
1999 ORIEL DAVIES OPEN, Newtown, Wales
1997 NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD OF WALES, Llanrwst, Wales
1993 NAZI KUNST, Galeria Satellite, Paris
1992 NATIONAL EISTEDDFOD OF WALES, Abergevenny, Wales
1989 HARDCORE, Mexic-Arte Museum, Austin, Texas
1988 ARTZ ATTACK, Project Arts Centre, Dublin
1987 DEATH AND DADA, Galerie Lehtinen, Berlin
1982 SADE, Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork, Ireland
1981 EXHIBITION OF DRAWING SIGNS, Rysunku Gallery, Poznan, Poland
1980 EXPEDITION IN THE PERFORMANCE WORLD, Artpool, Budapest
1979 EXHIBITION OF VISUAL ARTS, Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork, Ireland

COLLECTIONS

Ulster Museum, Belfast, Northern Ireland
Arts Council of Northern Ireland
Wolverhampton Art Gallery, England
Karl Ernst Museum, Hague, Belgium

Private collections worldwide

2000 0044, Ormeau Baths Gallery, Belfast
1999 0044, Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork, Ireland
1993 OF LOVE, Galerie Satellite, Paris
1989 ANZINE AS OBJECT, Karl Ernst Museum, Hague, Belgium
1989 HARDCORE, Mexic-Arte Museum, Austin, Texas
1989 ARTZ ATTACK, Project Arts Centre, Dublin
1988 AIR MAIL, Air Gallery, London
1987 CONFRONTATIONS, Projects UK touring exhibition 1982
1982 SADE, Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork, Ireland
1981 EXHIBITION OF DRAWING SIGNS, Rysunku Gallery, Poznan, Poland
1980 EVA, Limerick, Ireland
1979 EXHIBITION OF VISUAL ARTS, Crawford Municipal Gallery, Cork, Ireland

British Library, London
Private collections worldwide