



MARIE LE LIEVRE

BAGGAGE 2008

Marie le Lievre

Marie le Lievre's richly embodied paintings operate in the interstices of abstraction and representation in near equal parts, finding both formal and symbolic expression in this productive and generative terrain. Evolving from experimentation with media, technique and sustained investigations into the properties and potential of colour and surface, le Lievre has reconfigured an adapted style of modernist colour field painting into a representational object, that of a handbag. It is here however, that any simplified designation of the works as mere recognisable object trails off, full to the brim as they are with a painter's love of material and formal experimentation.

This twinning of deeply saturated abstraction with representational form gains symbolic potency and generous verisimilitude by le Lievre's selection, and near obsessive working of that ultimate and highly vaunted consumer object, the handbag. Laying aside the somewhat flip comment that 'bags are the new shoes', they do nonetheless occupy a central and currently, fetishised position in contemporary culture, one intimately connected to the feminine and female sexuality, although le Lievre's treatment and positioning of the form resists a singular reading.

In more general terms, and with an indicative title of *Baggage*, handbags, sharing metaphorical ground with vessels, can also be read as devices of containment in the widest sense (and potential spillage), be it of a sociological, psychosexual or psychological nature. Whether sweeping it under the carpet or bottling it up these expressions and terms like



baggage or containment are common vernacular for two of Freud's key dictums; the impact of the unconscious mind on conscious life and (the generally widely practiced activity of) repression, particularly of painful memories, as a type of defence mechanism.

As the author of a body of work dealing with 'baggage', le Lievre's personal life and subjectivity resist assuming central stage, at least not in an explicit manner. This in stark contrast to the queen of confessional art Tracey Emin with whom le Lievre's work could be compared with, particularly in their considerations of the messy, or less than pretty side of life. Instead there is a quietness, almost a close to her chest confidentiality to le Lievre's paintings even if such deep pools of poured and layered colour belie more than a little surface tension in the fissures and crackling caused by collisions between the alchemical behaviour of paint. Far from being mute they bespeak a warm and enigmatic, if at times tentative communication.

Robyn Pickens

Photography: Chris Kitson
Design: chrisparry.co.nz

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Biography

- 1996 B.A Criminology. Victoria University, Wellington.
- 2006 B.F.A Painting. University of Canterbury.
- 2007 B.F.A Honours. (First Class) Painting. University of Canterbury.
- 2008 M.F.A Painting. University of Canterbury.

Awards and Scholarships

- 2006 Bickerton Widdowson Scholarship
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- 2007 Third place. Mazda Emerging Artist Award.
- 2008 Ethel Rose Overton Scholarship
- 2008 Graduates Scholarship
- 2008 Masters Scholarship

Exhibitions

- 2005 SOFA Campus Gallery, Christchurch.
- 2006 Graduating Artists Show, COCA Gallery, Christchurch.
- 2007 Contemporary Emerging Artists Show, COCA Gallery, Christchurch.
- 2007 Honours Show, SOFA Gallery, Christchurch.
- 2008 Selected Finalists, James Wallace Award, Convention Centre, Auckland.
- 2008 Selected Finalists, James Wallace Award, The Dowse Gallery, Wellington.
- 2008 The Pretty Show, High Street Project, Christchurch.
- 2009 Masters 08, SOFA Gallery, Christchurch.
- 2009 Baggage, Brooke/Gifford Gallery, Christchurch.
- 2009 Cloud Nine, Christchurch City Gallery, Christchurch





'P Bag #1 (Baggage)', 300 x 300mm
Oil on Paper
'Bar on Bag', 600 x 600mm
Oil on Canvas



'P Bag #3 (Baggage)', 300 x 300mm
Oil on Paper
'Coco Mimi', 600 x 600mm
Oil on Canvas

