

## Things that gather; things that flow away

One of the ways that we describe the world around us is to talk about objects in spaces: tables in rooms, people in the street, plants under the sea. But sometimes when we look closely what we see is, instead, the textures of surfaces, different intensities of light and dark, layers of colour that give a sense of depth without any sense of perspective.

5 Sometimes we even notice the shift between these ways of seeing the world – as when the page one is reading is lit up by some light from the side and suddenly looks less like a hard surface and more like a fine textile made of thousands of fibres.

One important aspect of David Moses' painting and etching is the way that his works intensify this sense of transition between definite things in space and the uninterrupted textures that  
10 make up the space itself, and recede from us without limit. Forms emerge out of limitless depths of colour: organic bundles of life that are not quite solid bodies, but almost. In some works these forms are clearly people or common objects, in others they are dense knots of colour in the process either of disintegrating or of gathering the surroundings into themselves. Other objects seem as though they are being pulled back into the clouds of  
15 colour; pulled back from an existence as quantity into an existence as quality. The play of abstraction and concreteness can give a strange sense of movement to David Moses' canvases, even when each part of the composition seems to rest in its place.

Just as the 'objects' of these works can be more or less concrete, so too can the spaces. Sometimes there is no doubt that what we see are rooms with their own histories of  
20 occupancy and use, and the things that are yet to happen there are somehow latent in the surfaces. In other works the spaces are only partially defined and limited by clear lines and surfaces, corners and edges. Around these 'harder' corners and edges, the flows of colour fall, splinter into fragments, or rise like mists. Whether stable and clear or unstable and indefinite, these spaces prompt us both to reconstruct and anticipate: they feel heavy with  
25 time.

But what goes on in these spaces is nonetheless obscure. There is a sense that the events unfold to music that we can't hear. A heavy cloak of silence hangs between us, who look, and the scenes in which things move to rhythms and pulses that we can only guess at. There seems to be orchestration: things growing and assembling, disintegrating and dissipating.  
30 But the purpose of these transformations belongs to the world that we are viewing and not the world of our everyday experience. Like watching chemical processes under a microscope, these works open up a window onto events that are normally hidden from view.



2013.DG.TD.37.35.0001



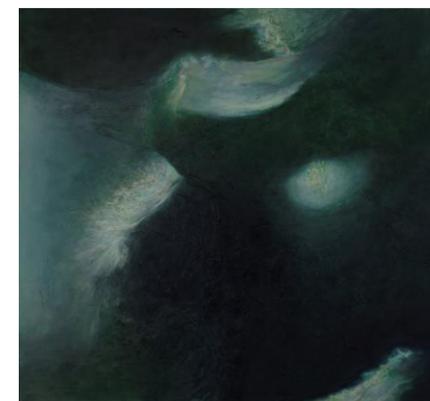
2015.LW.OE.150.180.0015



2015.LW.OE.150.120.0012



2013.LW.OE.50.40.0010



2015.LW.OE.120.130.0002

## The painting and etching process

As one might expect for works with such a delicate balance between definite objects and surfaces on the one hand, and indefinite flows, mists, and depths on the other, most of David Moses' paintings (and pieces in combined media) are developed in several layers. Photographs documenting the progression of individual works show how completely the canvases are transformed from the first arrangement of lines, surfaces, patches of colour and forms, to the last layer, which redirects the movements of the previous layers. The need to be responsive to what emerges from the canvas is something that David Moses has commented on when describing how he works, and this is evident in the finished pieces. The internal movements and tensions in some of the pieces would probably be almost impossible to plan in detail from the outset, and his way of working allows him to arrange and rearrange, layer on layer, until the right event on the canvas is captured.

## Individual works

Earlier works (before circa 2009) focused more on creating spaces through definite surfaces that intersected and sometimes opened onto limitless dark expanses. This sense of emptiness and anticipation of unknown events can be strangely intense for such sparse compositions, and is still evident as the oeuvre has developed (2009.LW.OE.150.120.0005). However, the focus on space has since been complemented with an attention to life and movement within these scenes. There are bodies here: both human and non-human.

In *Transformation* (2009.LW.OE.160.130.0003) the dense mass that falls into the scene from the left of the canvas seems both blind and intensely full of life. It is a body, but not a human one. As the title suggests, the painting captures a moment in the reorganization of this bundle of life, which spills over in its dark space. In other works creature-like forms move to more gentle rhythms, such as the two bundles of colour that pulsate on a deep brown canvas, like flowers blossoming under the sea (2010.LW.OE.50.40.0005).

Some of the works are also inhabited by human figures. A series of paintings from 2010 are of single figures in portrait; figures who clearly have their own postures, gestures, and mood (2010.LW.OE.160.130.0006). But their bodies are not quite solid: they are composed of dozens of parts held together by a force that is strong enough to suggest human bodies, but at the same time too weak to keep them from disintegrating and flying apart. It is as though what we get the chance to see in these figures are the forces of cohesion and decay always at work in the world, but not normally perceptible.



2009.LW.OE.150.120.0005



2010.LW.OE.50.40.0005



2009.LW.OE.160.130.0003



2009.LW.OE.150.120.0005

Other human figures are not content with being watched; *they watch you*: groups of faces together in a room, but each still eerily alone and looking out at us. They are positioned, as it were, at different distances from our normal world: some solid and close, others faint and receding into the canvas (2011.LW.OE.150.180.0003). More strangely still, their bodies may

5 either span different spaces in the canvas, or break off abruptly where there is a change in colour or texture. In short, sometimes they occupy space, and sometimes the space simply slices them in half (2011.P.OE.330.450.0001), as if it were heavy and the figures were airy. The boundaries that divide many of the paintings into sections produce, once again, the effect that characterises David Moses' work, which is the interplay between abstract composition, where lines and surfaces rest in their place, on the one hand, and the urgent feeling of an event that is moving through this composition and unsettling it, on the other. Sometimes this event is played out by people, but sometimes simply by searching tentacles of colour that try to reach across the order of the composition (2012.DG.GM.120.170.0003). And behind all this we can sometimes glimpse the suggestion of an outside world that is not

15 caught up in the turmoil, as if the storm were in here around our heads and out there, through distant windows or doors, things remain still (2012.DG.GM.120.170.0002). While many works make us look within the marks for faces, and then to look again, perhaps none are so uncanny as the ghost-like human forms are *left behind* in the canvas (2013.LW.OE.150.180.0010), just barely distinguishable from the misty spaces that they occupy. Whether traces left behind, or collections of parts held together into bodies, David Moses' figures live in the transitory moments of processes greater than themselves.

But even where human figures are not evident, the world that we observe here in a series of frozen moments is one in constant transformation: the sharp lines of a table evaporate in a mist (2013.LW.OE.50.40.0015); a dark rectangle like a doorway disperses the soft clouds of colour and gently draws a line of perspective across the canvas (2013.LW.OE.50.40.0012);

20 a sheet of pink light shatters over a darker ledge making sparks that leap out from the surface (2013.LW.OE.150.180.0007); stormy grey clouds fill a rectangle of canvas, and make us strain to see through their drifts and turbulent spots to the landscape that they may or may not conceal behind them (2014.LW.OE.120.200.0001). David Moses' works remind us

30 something important about our experience of the world: colour, depth, texture, and intensity are not things that objects *have*; they are the qualities *out of which* objects are composed and *into which* they may decompose again.



2011.P.OE.330.450.0001



2011.LW.OE.150.180.0003



2012.DG.GM.120.170.0003



2012.DG.GM.120.170.0002



2013.LW.OE.50.40.0012



2013.LW.OE.150.180.0010



2013.LW.OE.50.40.0015



2013.LW.OE.150.180.0007



2014.LW.OE.120.200.0001