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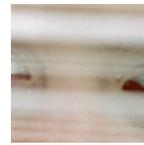
Uwe Wittwer New Paintings Review

by HELEN WILSON on Mar 20, 2011

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Uwe Wittwer, Interior negative (2009)

16th February – 2nd April

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There is something quite ironic about the title *New Paintings*, given that the works in this exhibition both feel and look extremely old.

This impression may owe itself to the fact that these exquisitely composed interiors, still lifes and portraits are based upon source material that is exactly that. From works by Flemish, Dutch, and Spanish Old Masters, to black and white pre-war snapshots passed down through his family, much of Wittwer's subject matter is rooted in the past.

It may also be attributed to the heavy palette of sepia hues employed by the artist; mottled ecrus and umbers that weigh, not just on the canvases themselves, but on the room and the impression of the viewer.

Whatever the reason, this sense of agedness pervades Wittwer's subjects – be them people, animals, landscapes or interiors – making them seem tired, wrinkled, old.

In *Interieur (2007)* the artist paints his sitters with such ghost-like pallor that almost absents them from the scene, while in *Portrait (2011)* a young girl stands, teddy bear in one hand and walking cane in the other, wearing a disconsolate expression that pulls not just at the corners of her mouth but on her entire being: her slumped shoulders, tired eyes and lifeless complexion.

With the same vagueness of hand, the artist depicts his interiors with a blurred abstraction that causes the walls, floors and ceilings all slump into one as in *Interior negative (2009)*, or else people to become indeterminable from their surroundings, such as the man in *Interior (2008)* whose figure is difficult to distinguish from the bed on which he lies.

As a medium, oil paintings are traditionally concerned with depicting the real, as John Berger said “the colour, the texture, the tangibility of an object”. But in these works Wittwer chooses to forfeit detail, in order to instead communicate something much more striking: a sense of moment.

What really impresses upon the viewer looking at these pieces is not the masterful handing of the paint or consummate composition, but the forlorn beauty and powerful ability of these paintings to arouse an overwhelming sense of nostalgia.

Tags: haunch of venison, Painting, uwe wittwer

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