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Selina Foote's latest exhibition at Two Rooms, *A Visitor*, shows the artist developing her established methodological practice and introducing new compositional motifs. She continues her conversation with the art historical canon, and many of the titles in the current show (*Woman on a Divan*, *Woman Standing Holding a Fan*, and *Odile*) hark back to early modernism, while several are aesthetically redolent of iconic pieces by Sonia Delaunay, Ellsworth Kelly, Marcel Duchamp, and Agnes Martin. Indeed, as Foote reflects, 'these works move through painting's history, borrowing individual solutions to painterly problems.'

At the center of Foote's artistic process is the inspiration and guidance of historical painting. Referred to by the artist as "gleaning", Foote begins by selecting a reproduction of an artwork from an exhibition catalogue or artist monograph. The source image is then reduced to an abstracted drawing and a few key visual features - a particular line, or an area of deep shadow or dappled light, or perhaps the use of a certain colour - are mapped onto the canvas. It is these elements that guide the emerging composition as Foote discards the reproduction and transitions from using graphite to using paint. The number of mediating steps mean that the final artworks are always radically divergent from their source image (one would be hard pressed to determine which artwork inspired which painting), with many of the works in this exhibition beginning with portraits painted by female Impressionists Mary Cassatt, Eva Gonzales, and Berthe Morisot. Yet while the source image may be rendered indeterminate during the painting process, a glimmer of it does linger for Foote often leaves some areas of the canvas fresh and unpainted, and in these segments the viewer can find soft graphite traces from the initial act of translation and transcription.

Foote's use of a gridded structure aligns her with a rich lineage of artists who have turned to the principles of geometry to guide their approach to the canvas. For Foote's latest suite of paintings, the grid works as a navigational tool to map the physical limits of the canvas by reinforcing its basic structure. The painterly approach varies significantly between the artworks, but they are united by each having their vertical and horizontal edges, and all of their four corners, marked in paint.

A notable aesthetic development, seen in several works in the current exhibition, is the presence of undulating bands of black paint. Shimmering across the surface of multiple pieces - including *Mud Pie*, *Katherine*, and *Dreaming Girl* - these truncated ribbons impart a lively sense of movement, while also establishing a sense of depth. In each of these paintings, hard-edged blocks of colour anchor the composition, while the calligraphic marks seem to float and ripple above them. Writing of the 'wave motif', Foote notes that it extends back to Duchamp's iconic *3 Standard Stoppages* (1913-14) but that it also acknowledges 'the curved forms' characteristic of Sonia Delaunay's geometric abstractions. In fact the waves are drawn with homemade rulers, formed by the curvature of Gregg's spice bottle lids and drinking glasses.

Vestiges of Duchamp also appear woven through *Girl* and *Odile*. In these paintings, Foote uses a tight sequence of narrow, reiterative black lines to create an all-over composition. The sharp rhythmic lines activate the composition and combined with the figurative titles, they encourage the viewer to seek angular body parts - such as the crook of an arm, a bent leg, or a raised foot - moving across the canvas. In this manner, the works are evocative of Duchamp's masterful *Nude Descending a Staircase No.2* (1912) where the human form is reduced and distilled to a series of abstracted conical elements, which, by way of repetition, similarly convey the impression of bodily motion. Again however, while Foote may have been inspired by a portrait in the germinal stages of painting, the finished product exists as a wholly independent piece of geometric abstraction - one that is accomplished by a linear precision and velvety passages of brushed paint.

Jemma Field
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