

## MARY RAMSDEN

Pilar Corrias, London

Though supposedly 'smart' and sleek, today's mobile phones cause many of us to make a mess. We leave sticky finger prints on their surfaces – shiny slicks of grease swiped across screens. Perhaps these actions unwittingly turn us all into painters, repeatedly making our mark, gesturing upon planes to leave traces of thought and movement.

'Swipe' was British artist Mary Ramsden's second solo show with Pilar Corrias – the first was in 2012 while she was still in her final year at the Royal Academy School. It comprised 13 small-scale paintings that traverse the digital and material worlds to ultimately place importance on the physical object and its sensible presence. In an age in which digital platforms proliferate, disseminating intangible whirls of words and images for inexhaustible consumption, what role – or relevance – does painting have in expressing today's (im)material world? Indeed, do we still live in a material world – am I still a material girl?

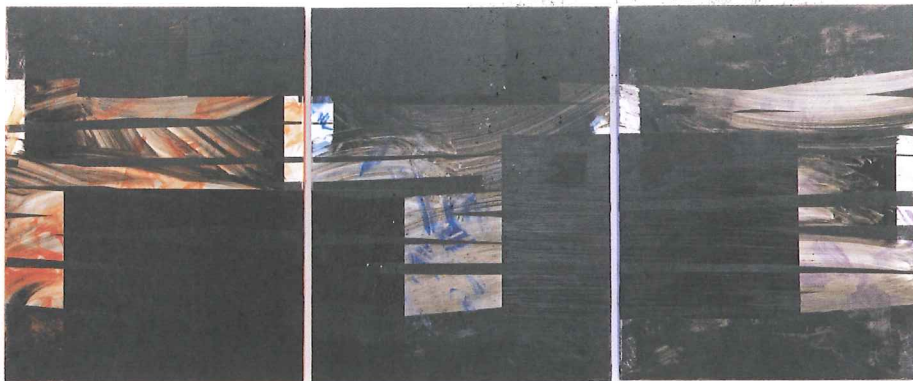
In a recent interview about art and the digital, the artist asked: 'How do you make something stick these days? How do you make something sit differently?' Primarily abstract, layering quadrilaterals at subtly shifting angles, her paintings investigate how space is perceived now that computer screens provide constructed environments that can seduce us in equal measure to the physical spaces surrounding us. The digital realm is characterized by its flatness, by surface: cropped layers of content and overlapping windows compressing three-dimensionality.

While Ramsden's works are rooted in the traditional painting vocabulary of oil on board, her surfaces are somewhat more experimental. In *Lick 4* (2014) a pearlescent plane of white gently shimmers, blemished by a succulent smear of blue and green, as though a lollipop-stained tongue or black-berry-dyed finger had been run across it. In another work, *Lurid and Cute* (2015),

1  
Mary Ramsden  
*Hold Still*, 2015, oil on  
board, three panels, each  
76 × 61 × 3.5 cm

2  
Jesse Darling & Takeshi  
Shiomitsu, *Spirit Level*,  
2015, mild steel,  
plastic, soya milk, tourniquet,  
cotton tape, steel chain,  
123 × 13 × 290 cm

3  
Josh Kline, *Forever 48*,  
2013, video still



a matt black monochrome surrenders a little streak of blue, almost liquid in its flow, within which there are subtle smudges of purple and pink. There is a sumptuousness to these works that turns utilitarian swipes across electronic touchscreens into movements that are meaningful and meditative.

Particularly successful was *Zerstörung* (Destruction, 2015) a two-panel work that suggests obliteration through covering up and adding, rather than demolishing. Geometric layers of white paint are built up and overlain, like sheets of paper, to block out a background surface that has been scratched, crisscrossed and smudged by finger-marks in coral pink and cobalt blue. The painting's luminous yellow edges hum and shimmer off the surrounding white wall, as if this were an electronic surface never at rest, constantly changing and shifting.

Paintings such as *Sunroof* (2015) felt less compelling, layering large white voids upon black backgrounds in which only hints of the artist's hand are discernible. Often, the edges of Ramsden's paintings are of particular importance; swathes of paint amass, sometimes dappled and flicked, or thickly layered like icing at the edge of a cake. It is at these edges that information from the buried surfaces beneath bleeds through – as if we were able to access the search history of the work.

A highlight was *Hold Still* (2015), a triptych of orange, blue and purple panels in which a swiping motion was almost palpable in the slide of coloured brushstrokes layered beneath black and white squares – as if mimicking the warmth of human touch or light against cold machine. Its playful title recalls hands that won't rest, constantly fidgeting with the technology at our fingertips. Indeed, many of Ramsden's titles – ... *all milkshake and ice-cream* or ... *this television is just a large, broken radio with abstract art on the front* – suggest the frenetic and spontaneous modes of personal expression of social-networking sites such as Twitter. Ramsden brings us back from these virtual spaces of connectivity to the human touch of painterly gestures and handled materials.

LOUISA ELDERTON

## JESSE DARLING & TAKESHI SHIOMITSU

Andor, London

For their previous collaboration, Jesse Darling and Takeshi Shiomitsu bussed a gallery-full of visitors to a construction site at the very edge of Europe. The show, *Same Same*, opened last October in Georgia and involved site-specific installations at Batumi's CAC 41N/41E gallery in addition to a two-hour journey to the border of the disputed separatist state of Abkhazia. Here, piles of concrete tetrapods embody the duality suggested by the implied '... but different' of the exhibition title: at once a breakwater and a potential tank trap. Reunited a few months later in their more familiar environs of east London's Hackney Road, the two artists explored another interface of the modern security state in a show at simultaneously pregnant with meaning and teeming with stuff.

The majority of the 18 works on show at Andor recall something of the (disavowed) early works of the Suriname-born conceptualist Stanley Brouwn: transparent polythene bags filled with a seemingly random assortment of junk. In a 21st-century context, however, the clear plastic bag inescapably evokes the experience of airport baggage screening. While many of the bags' contents (lubricant and Vagisil, for instance, along with various anti-fungal creams) seem tailored to conjure the potential embarrassments entailed by the compulsory display of one's personal liquids and foams, other bags – like the one tucked away at ankle-height in a corner of the room, containing two monkey nuts and an asthma inhaler nestled cosily inside a jewellery box (*Untitled (archive series)*, 2015) – are like perfect Joseph Cornell-style surrealist assemblages.

Each of these bags is fixed to the wall with a scrap of familiar red and white security tape. Only, in this case, the red block capitals of the word 'Security' have been replaced with 'Certain'. (Rolls of 'Certain Tape' are also for sale, in a limited edition of 50.) This word play