
RESIDUE

fried contemporary is proud to present a solo exhibition by Dylan Graham

DYLAN GRAHAM: PAINT AS ITSELF, SELF AND OTHER

By Ingrid Stevens | 28 September - 28 October 2017

I have known Dylan Graham for a number of years, as a student and then as a young emerging artist, and I have always considered him to be a very good painter. However, in recent years, he appears to have immersed himself to an even greater degree in painting, spending long and regular (daily) hours in the studio, in an engagement, an activity and a contemplation of painting that for him has become an intense and cathartic experience, which results in exceptional works. This immersion has allowed him to go beyond his subjects, or what might be described as the 'others', into his deep psyche, his 'self', and at the same time, into a confrontation with paint and painting as 'itself.' One can almost see this ferocious wrestling with paint on a physical level, all the while engaging it intellectually and philosophically.

His 'others', the images he paints, mostly portraits or figures of women, are chosen simply because these people are there, in

Graham's life, and they may occasionally be seemingly arbitrarily contrasted by other images: a male figure, a book, a broken container. They may be special and even beautiful as individuals or as symbols, such as the 'sacred' book, but they are at the same time ordinary. Graham treats them merely as sources or origins, to quote him, for the "terrifying game of painting". His titles, for example Pierced light; Resurrection dream or History's residue, do little to elucidate the subjects, and add another layer of intrigue to this game, in which the images are worked and reworked, becoming encrusted with layers of paint, while they remain recognisably themselves, in their particular otherness.

There is also, in these images, a sense of nostalgia or longing, an elegy for or to someone or something lost but unknown. Graham speculates that this may occur because he listens to music as he paints, and the music itself, for example by Arvo Pärt, creates a mood that is dreamy,

ethereal or nostalgic, and somehow, possibly because of the way the images seem to loom in a fleeting moment of light from intensely dark backgrounds, they are as if emerging briefly or about to dissolve and be lost. The connection between painting and music, however subtle in the paintings, is a very real one for Graham, who is also a musician who writes and performs music, and in both activities he seeks the possibility of some sort of moment of everything coming together, which he terms "a fusion", a moment of becoming or possibly a moment of disappearing.

The essential subject or object of these works is paint and the act of painting. He approaches the idea of mark-making as an almost ancient or Ur experience, a primal urge making one think for example of hand-prints on caves. He works freely, moving between different types of mark-making, and allows images to emerge. It is for him always a tentative, challenging process, a constant

searching without the expectation of knowing something final about the act of painting. So there appear suggestions of certainty, followed by moments of working with the unknown, moments of distraction and attention, followed again by inattention, all of which are embedded in the paint surface. Graham's is a sedimentary process, possibly comparable to those of Francis Bacon or Lucien Freud. Sometimes he will scratch into the paint, a crossing out, an 'x' marks the spot, dots, which are spontaneous but appear to either point to certain areas of the painting, or to deface them. Red marks on the faces or bodies might suggest that the painter, in his total engagement, kissed or licked the surface. This is a response that the viewer might feel as well, to the delicious materiality of paint. The painter's presence is imprinted into the surface of the paint, in a physical and almost sensuous way.

Painting, especially in the way Graham does, is "an instrument for introspection" (Celant, 2011:38). One question that arises is, why do we make art? The answer, like the act of painting, is never final, as theories, experiences and intuitions are framed, then discarded.

Another question is, who am I? The painting is never finally resolved, just as the self is always becoming and never 'there'. Painting, like life itself, when one is really engaged, is an ongoing encounter with the self and psyche, as well as with the act and the materiality of painting.

Sources

Celant, G . 2011. Anselm Kiefer. Milan: Skira.

DYLAN GRAHAM

ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Dylan Graham was born in 1977 in Pretoria, South Africa. He received a degree in Fine Arts from Technikon Pretoria in 2000 specialising in oil painting. Graham currently works and lives as a practicing visual artist, musician and part-time lecturer at TUT in Pretoria.

Graham has had two solo exhibitions to date: In Arms (2009) and Pillory (2010) both with Artspace. He has also participated in a number of group exhibitions across South Africa, including alongside Ruhan Janse van Vuuren and Cobus Haupt. Graham regularly exhibits with Found Collective.

FriedContemporary is proud to present Graham's third solo exhibition Residue September 2017.

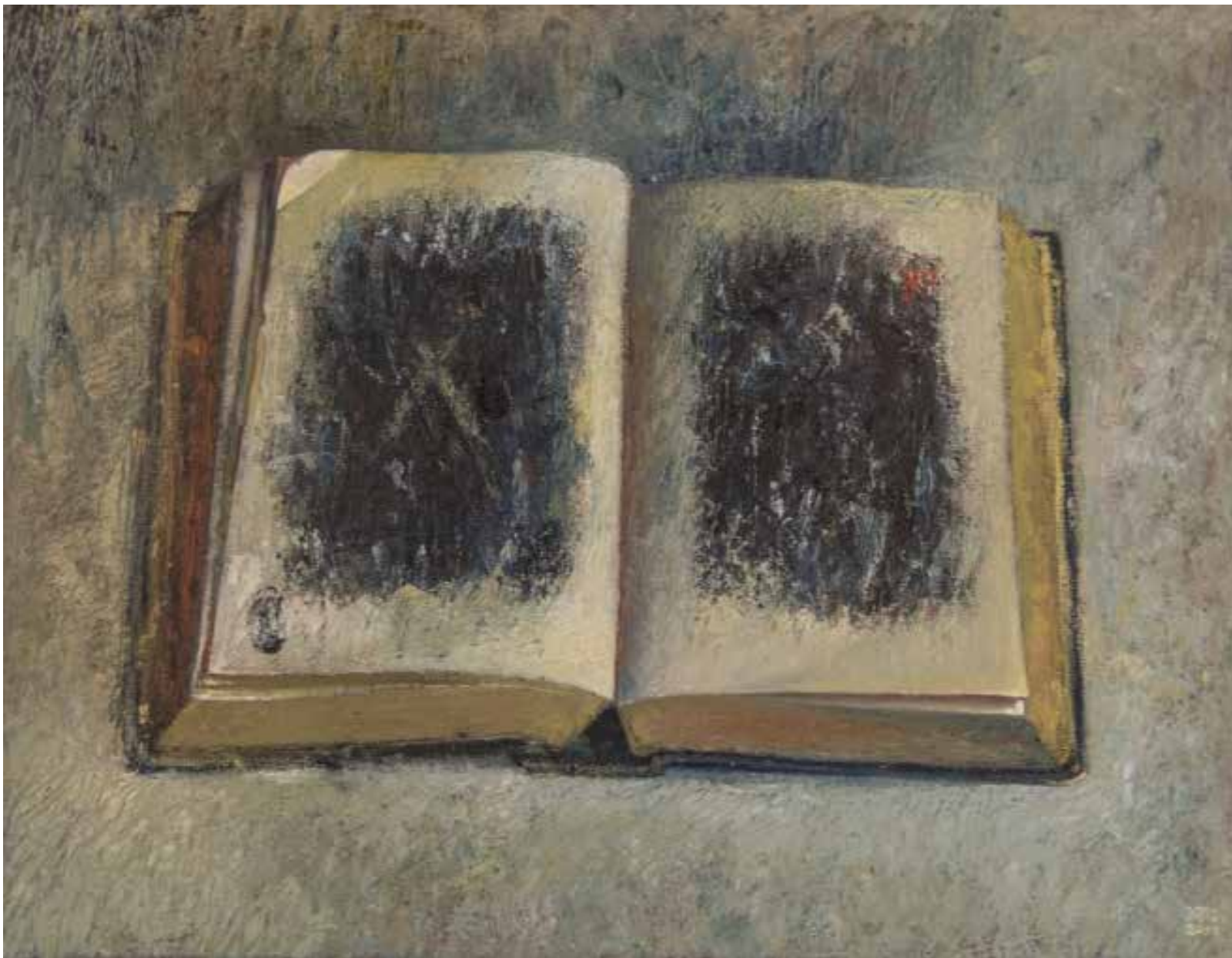


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An Elegy To Light, 2017, Oil on Linen, 125,5 x 63,5 cm, Framed

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Devil This, Devil That, 2017, Oil on Linen, 38 x 47,5 cm, Framed

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Crossed Heart, 2017, Oil on Linen, 62,5 x 47,5cm, Framed



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Edelsteen, 2017, Oil on Linen, 47,5 x 38 cm, Framed

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History's Residue, 2017, Oil on Linen, 27,5 x 22,5 cm, Framed

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In a Landscape, 2017, Oil on Linen, 47,5 x 38 cm, Framed

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Rights and Wrongs, 2017, Oil on Linen, 125,5 x 63,5 cm, Framed



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Lucid Haze, 2017, Oil on Linen, 47,5 x 38 cm, Framed

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Memory of a Voices, 2017, Oil on Linen, 47,5 x 38 cm, Framed

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Pierced Light, 2017, Oil on Linen, 27,5 x 22,5 cm, Framed

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Resurrection Dreams, 2017, Oil on Linen, 150 x 120 cm



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The Branches Move For You, 2017, Oil on Linen, 38 x 47,5 cm, Framed

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Worlds Apart, 2017, Oil on Linen, 102,5 x 77,5 cm, Framed



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