

Catalogue Foreword: Selection of Works 2008-2013
By Helen Sumpter
February 2014

Chaos behind order and order behind chaos, is the phrase that keeps coming to mind when thinking about Bijan Daneshmand's paintings. What might begin as a minimal design of sweeping, or more often hard-edged lines, is built upon with layers of paint in the form of controlled grids, strips, stripes and bands of colour, interspersed with layers of looser, more expressionist brushmarks and washes of semi-translucent pigment. What might initially appear to be simple, clean lines of geometric abstraction, in works such as, *Iota*, 2013, or *Green Yellow Peaks*, 2013, on more prolonged viewing, function as complex frameworks or open structures of support, containment and obfuscation – mesh, fencing, netting, scaffolding, armatures, shutters, blinds – beneath which something more tumultuous, but only just visible, swirls.

In other works surface detail takes on the form of tiles, bricks, tessellations or paneling, such as the diptych *Triclinic*, 2012, which is comprised of a harlequin pattern of triangles in shades of aquamarine. In this work the two panels - the smaller the same height but a third of the width of the larger- abut each other, emphasising their conformity of pattern and colour but difference in ratio and scale. Often paintings are structured to hang either horizontally or vertically, and to function both as standalone works and in diptychs, triptychs or quadriptychs. And because the dimensions of Daneshmand's canvases conform to the same aspect ratio, in principle they might all slot together to create one large, almost seamless patchwork polyptych.

In Daneshmand's use of colour, which is better experienced in the flesh than in reproduction, an optical illusion of movement is never far away. Beneath the overlays of bands and grids, small squares in shades of dusky pink may subtly gradate from lighter to darker tints, from left to right across the canvas, creating an almost imperceptible shimmering along a painting's surface. Complementary hues of red/green, blue/orange and yellow/purple may be mixed into each other in increasing ratios to highlight shifts in hue, like the effect of a sweeping shadow. Or the contrast between a grid of thin, dark lines painted over much lighter tones may appear, from a distance, to make that grid hover or float inches above from the canvas's surface.

Supports may be stretchers of canvas or linen, birch plywood or aluminium. Sometimes the patterning extends around the edges of the canvas, to imply a three-dimensional object rather than a flat surface. Maybe there's a suggestion here to materials used in other forms of construction, such as in building, which the artist has knowledge of from his previous training as a civil engineer, but perhaps the stronger suggestion is to the idea that the whole picture is always a sum of many elements and many layers – whether that 'picture' refers to something in a literal sense, such as an image of colour and texture, or refers to something metaphorically, such as human experience.

When slivers of buried layers of colour are left exposed through the latticing, particularly where edges and lines meet, again there's a reminder that the past is also part of the present, and that however ordered and restrained the surface, however perfect the line and accuracy of the geometry, there is often something more unruly and uncontrolled beneath, trying to break through.