



## High Days and Holidays: new paintings by Michael Clark

The work in Michael Clark's new Yorkshire exhibition offers a deep sense of quiet celebration, full of days of high sunlight and holiday festivity, in subtle suggestion and pervasive sensitivity. The still life paintings, vases of flowers, quietly depicting objects you might pass a glance over briefly, are deftly held for the slow pleasure of contemplation. Venice locations, with gondolas and the semi-abstract vertical lines of their mooring-poles, never lapse into the merely 'scenic'. Always, this artist has an eye for the particular: a wall, a doorway, a set of windows in distinctive design, forms of symmetry that give to the viewer an unobtrusive sense of actual presence. This slows you down and enhances your appreciation of the moment, which is the work of great art.

Sometimes we might recognise specific buildings but often the almost abstract painterliness combines with the exactness of things seen to freshen the vision. Paint dribbling becomes rainwater on real buildings. Soft, lofty sunlight falls on shop windows, fills out the shape of a bridesmaid's dress hanging on a screen, in readiness. Luminescent, rich, unemphatic colour occupies the atmosphere in the same unshowy way the buildings themselves occupy space, forms gradually deepening, accumulated over many seasons.

There is always the promise of shared enjoyment. Flowers are arranged in a hotel courtyard, anticipating guests. People are usually not depicted, but there is a vibrant sense that they are just behind the scenes, in celebrations, weddings, parties about to happen or happening elsewhere. As we look, we silently join their company.

There is both a wistfulness and a robustness about these paintings that is unsentimental and emotionally poised, carefully held in a living moment of experience you might savour. Every time we stop and look at them, they recreate the present tense with heightened enjoyment, both retrospective and anticipating, in a stillness we return to happily.

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