

*The Schleifmühlgasse Painting, The Eshenbachgasse Painting,  
The Puppy Dog Paintings*

Bell Street Project Space

This exhibition consists of an edition of posters, as well as two large paintings, each of the paintings being made up of five panels. Each of these panels is 1:20 scale reproduction of the front room of a gallery on either Schleifmühlgasse or Eschenbachgasse. These Paintings are painted one colour from a nine-piece colour wheel determined by numerology based on the name of each gallery.

Puppies, in their first few months in life will sleep together to ensure a great means of survival, they lie in bundles for protection and to preserve body heat. This show presents two groups of painting-objects whose assembly places one gallery lying somewhat over another and in turn that one onto another. We can consider each painting-box a puppy and a group of five, a group of puppies.

Both streets are laid with the galleries running from left to right, in the same way we would read a sentence. The depth of the gallery runs along the axis from which you enter it.

This work partly speaks of the nature of symbiosis, but what these paintings are really about is the nature of painting and the struggle of determining meaning from an abstract picture plane, instead of giving you puppies to think about, maybe we could have thought about birds sitting on a fence or horses running around a race-track. Each of these could be both a way of illustrating the way we read something (5 galleries on one street) or how we should approach abstract painting (are monochrome paintings boring).

These paintings simulate the way in which we come to know the galleries in Vienna, or maybe any other space. So this exhibition is also partly about me and the way I have come to know each space. I invite you to look at these paintings as one might walk down a street. If you've been to these streets it would help, then one knows the characteristics of one gallery to another, one might be larger, cleaner or brighter than another. Any gallery might be remembered in relation to its neighbours.

If looking at a series of paintings was like walking down a street then it might be considered quite linear. But painting isn't really, what you see in the first moment your eye hits the canvas is the same as just before you walk away, the only linear element being the time we live through as we view it, which has more to do with us than with the canvas. So when the linear mode (our project of passing through a street of paintings) ultimately fails, we see the fundamental conditions of painting.

As we view these paintings the non-objective grip on abstraction is both glorified and subverted, whilst the gaze of the viewer is met by the stoicism of a monochrome surface, so to it is penetrated by the knowledge of social and cultural goings-on of the world that closely surrounds it.

Alex Lawler, Vienna, December, 2006.