

# STATION

## *Timeshare*

Esther Stewart

28th March — 18th April 2015

Balustrades or beds, off centre; just blocked colour, whacked and slightly shifted. These 10 panels are unmistakably works by Esther Stewart. Here her intuitive geometries leave from Sim city for the tiles of an elaborate Escher palace missing the illusion. Repositioned and/or refined, Stewart's work in hard-edged abstraction comes through enamel and object painting and now appears at its flattest, thickest in vibrant acrylic. The history of geometric painting, an avant-garde become tradition, is coded: the notion of Cartesian space is projected against a wall of hypocrisy. Many leave it at that—the minimal object literalises the space, its novel negativity exploding the gestalt threshold between art and life. Stewart's paintings do not follow this overly formalised and ultimately hubristic logic however, the abstraction surfs a different ambiguity. In his 1884 satire *Flatland*, the pedagogue Edwin A. Abbott, writing under the assumed nom de plume, A. Square, conceives of life operating distinctly in each dimension, the science fiction of the fourth world is already on its way, but hard to prove: 'How can it be otherwise, when all one's prospect, all one's landscapes, historical pieces, portraits, flowers, still life, are nothing but a single line, with no varieties except degrees of brightness and obscurity.' Not to mention colour. The revolutionary tendencies of aesthetics are overthrown and hidden in plain sight. The initiates can be found in *Timeshare*.

*Timeshare* is a co-operative transaction, a commercial interest albeit without any apparent vanishing point. It is endless accumulation, our mutual mercantile fervour is washed of any fixed historical point, lost in the vicissitudes of credit. For Stewart *Timeshare* is a weird way into the spaces of incommensurable engagement, non-Euclidean geometry and the hyper-projection of imagined space. The notion of a planimetric habitation—the transformation of three dimensions onto a depthless planar surface—encodes the memory of a projected perspective developed and nominalised, the difficult cousin of Euclidean applicability. In the history of mathematics prior to the introduction of Kurt Gödel's incompleteness theorems, the purist science of numbers was split between the formalism of mathematicians led by figures such as David Hilbert and the alternative intuitionist approach to abstract notation by figures such as L.E.J. 'Burtus' Brouwer. Stewart's suggestion of habitable, but impenetrable interiors are subject to such transformations, so that in *Timeshare* they appear almost comedic in their mute abilities to engage the rigid formalism required for the definition of space while painting holds the truth to the lie of a mutually beneficial fixed point perspective infinity.

What art is should be inferable from the work. 'The future is not altogether determined by the present moment' is a statement of intent, it is a quotation—newness, novelty is no longer determined by a rupture or break with the contemporary situation, the conditions don't change, they are reorganised against the fabrics of history. Stewart's art has been informed from the outset by a concern for the elastic nexus that pulls art towards design functionality and back, all the while maintaining that most persistent formula for modernism—purposive purposelessness, disorientation, confusion. With these works she executes each preconceived and serialised plan for the compact surface, the index of their projected collection is the show, for one time only. The works appear in one room, exclusively for your deal. You are invited in on Stewart's terms. The sensory immersion within these interiors allows for no trespass. The space is always the space, the object under perception remains the object, it subjects you to killer colour.

The suggestive status of these works belies their rigorous formalism. Suprematism—now to be confused with counter-culture fashion oligopolies—was earlier engendered by the absolutes of El Lissitzky and generated another modern paradoxical syntagm, non-material materialism. In order to describe an end to art, A., the conditioned outcome serves their realisation as the ultimate proofs for the theory far better than any generalisable formula. One could add to the following concoction an objective status: '5 drams of the perfume "Coty" to tickle the nostrils of the fine gentry...10cc of sulphuric acid to be thrown into the face of the ruling classes,' the labour of a thousand solemn hours of repetitive activity. From its 1925 date of publication and the historical conditions for the presentation of this 'pangeometry' we stand 90 years hence, now at a right-angled tangent to these infinities, just as Stewart has similarly lifted the topographies of these imagined interiors from the vertical through the horizontal and thus from 3-d space into the non-material materialism in the domain of the two dimensional – the notion of form has shifted (Hubert Damisch, Rosalind Krauss, and no more play)... '15cc of some kind of metallic solution that later changes into a new source of light.' All that remains is colour on MDF board, applied on thick and with deep, decorative cuts. The edge of these irregular polygonal shapes sharp finish at their predetermination, they are applied over and over again. These places bounded by lines—there are no coloured curves in flatland—sliced off and martialled through the layers of manually rolled and applied paint. Their execution is compacted while the compositions still echo the confident intuition that signifies all of Stewart's work. *Timeshare* is enhanced in scale, the

immersive feeling of this thickened space swells to the anthropomorphic dimensions of Vitruvian accommodation.

- Giles Fielke