

mouth-piece Joe Davie

In a world bombarded with visual imagery through television, mass media and advertising, Joe Davie's work is distinctive for its precision and insight. The subtlety of his palette, skilled draughtsmanship and strong formal design invite contemplation and reflection in a way that is consistently challenging to both artist and audience. Gently provocative Davie delights in the surreal juxtaposition of ideas and materials. The meeting of contradictory characters, cultures or visual elements such as colour, pattern or form, create intriguing dialogues in his work. Davie's wonderfully ambivalent zinc and copperplate etchings, watercolours, oils on canvas and mixed media works inspire an imaginative response.

The viewer is playfully led into deeper consideration of the inherent vulnerability and fallibility within a grand design. Divine or entirely self-constructed, the idea of design is a powerful line of enquiry in Davie's art. The human scale within his work echoes the humility of a pilgrim. Admirably Davie treads his own path, grounded in the Scottish Figurative Tradition through his training at the Glasgow School of Art in the 1980's. In this context his whole approach to the figure is brilliantly subdued and refreshing. He conveys a sense of the monumental and iconic not through obvious physical scale but in terms of human aspiration.

The figure of the pilgrim, soldier or shopper is a recurrent motif, part of the artist's iconography and of archetypal significance. Davie utilises fragments of narrative and symbolic characters in a way that is relevant and contemporary. Use of loaded text or imagery is beautifully handled as the artist quietly interrogates the promotion and dominance of lifestyle based Western consumerism.

The evolution of his work in painting, collage and printmaking demonstrate an adept understanding of the craft and the dynamic impetus of experimentation. The artist's engagement with different media continuously pushes the boundaries of his own technique. Diverse influences from Inuit Art to interior design catalogues resurface throughout his work in a constant process of recognition. Davie's art explores contradiction rather than absolutes, his multi-layered compositions works of extraordinary depth, irony and humour.

Georgina Coburn 2008