

There is always distance between the eye and the artwork. The eye is always trailing its object of interest, vision is a means to cover this distance. Yet, sometimes it seems that this distance can be overcome. During modernism for example, the non-representational painting was not an index to the outside world, the viewer was not required to rely on one's imagination to experience it. Instead the painting could be immediately processed through the act of seeing. It was not until the minimalist extremism of self-reference that a sense of distance was re-injected [Lawson, p. 82]. This historical process via modernism brought attention to the distance between the viewer and the work, complicated this relationship, and after this point distance, even critical distance cannot simply be assumed.

Anders Oinonen's paintings are animated and bright, coated with dense, heavy washes and enlightened with sharp, abrupt pigments. His new paintings are renderings of faces, tightly framed in compact spaces. These faces, taking up most of the picture plane, always gaze outside the frame of the painting. Their stare follows a diagonal line, which cuts sharply through the canvas, covers a great distance, separating them from the viewer. The distance becomes even more prevalent through the visual interaction between the viewer and the face, where no direct eye contact can be achieved. This is especially true of *Middaze* (2006). As a result, a strange kind of intimacy is formed because although these faces woo the viewer into their personal spaces and although they are immersed in the same activity, nothing else brings them together, everything else is about distance. In short, the face and the viewer occupying the same space are in a different moment, a different present tense. Only the action of looking is common between them. In this work, looking does not have a privileged place as it did during modernism. Nor is looking simply an exercise in interpretation culminating in a subjective opinion about the work. Instead, it is entrenched in vision, yet itself acts as a system of movement, movement through different eyes, passing through one pair, only to arrive at the next.

The faces themselves reference a variety of periods and styles in the history of art. One could think of them as helmets, or faces of antiquity. Sometimes they almost seem cubist, other times they appear as primitive masks. But they never appear simply as faces, they are distanced from a face, abstracted from a face. They breakup into geometric shapes, while the brushstrokes not only characterize the facial features, define facial regions, but also release the figure's intense gaze, and transform its deep interior into a palette of colour and intensity. Underneath all this is the bare face, which appears like a flat, impressionable, reflective plane. It is left as a base generality, the means for communication and miscommunication. Yet it is rarely accessible under the expressions and glances that populate its field, which in a dialogue are left on the facial exterior as cues for the other to decode. In *Looker* (2005), the face is covered with an overabundance of jagged, tiled marks. They struggle for position, stretching and climbing over each other to reach the surface. On these marks a shadow is cast, the shadow itself is in a shape of an eye (rotated ninety degrees), as if the other's gaze has arrived, as if it has finally covered the distance. This shadow is quiet and reserved, giving nothing away, it is a vector pointing at the face. In another painting also entitled *Looker* (2005), a shadow is cast by the subject's own nose. In this painting one senses a carnival-like atmosphere. An awkward figure, resembling a toy or a clown is presented. Only the long shadow brings the viewer back to a more serious reading. Here the shadow does not mark an arrival of the other's gaze, but drags diagonally across the mouth and chin, reinforcing the flatness of the face. Like a sundial it freezes the process of looking to a standstill, to an actual moment, where movement is only created by the interaction of the viewer with the face.

Standing in the gallery the viewer is left in a world of abstract marks, colours and simplified shapes, which are bold and soothing, but unfinished and mysterious too. They invite the viewer into a cross-fire of glances and gazes, into the movement of looking. Here the separation between the one looking and the one looked at has changed, like in the Greek choir, everyone becomes an audience, everyone becomes a generality, like the face itself, through which cold and warm currents flow, appearing as intensities, hot spots and cold spots, a colour here, a colour there.