

Sarah Dwyer  
Off Kilter

Exhibition runs from 1 March to 8 April 2023

We are proud to present *Off Kilter*, **Sarah Dwyer's** first solo exhibition in Continental Europe.

Her work moves fluidly, effortlessly and inimitably between various language of abstraction and figuration, creating an interstitial space between the two, at once definite and uncertain. So much happens simultaneously when you look - rare colours, fields or surfaces fluidly dance amoeba-like into each other and inevitably take shape at second glance. A mixture of visceral markings, elemental shapes and gestural strokes, resting on multidimensional swathes of colour, coalesce into personalities, or amorphous, distorted limbs, heads or genitalia.

Dwyer reveals layers of pattern which vibrate with energy, in a sense creating a drama both for herself and the viewer. "There is a refusal to come down either side of the abstraction- figuration fence because I enjoy the confused middle-ground where there is potential for suggestion, deception and cheekiness," she says.

In contrast to the relativity of disparate, almost purely abstract elements in her earlier work, attention has recently been drawn to the curious appearance of the body and bodily appendages in various states and attitudes, appearing and disappearing on the surface. The transformation speaks to the weight of life experience that accumulates with time and as an ode to the body as a complex locus of emotion. Across her works, the figure becomes an expressive device, moving and contorting like a boxer, dancing and jabbing in front of the canvas.

Developing from life drawings, she reworks the figures on the canvas, over and over, editing them down, pushing and pulling the forms into shape. For that she is using her own abstract lexicon of mark making developed over a fifteen year period, with a nod and a wink to the history of abstract figuration. She has started to take the discourse she has developed in painting into experimental sculpture - using it in dialogue with the paintings and drawings, as in our show. Between figuration and abstraction, the relationship to the nature of the gestural sign, the line, continues.

Dwyer has a physical approach to painting in the studio; digging and dragging forms and colours across the surface. In a way her works are almost a visual translation of her quasi-performative approach to treating the canvas. Her energy and aura when being with bystanders or helpers in the studio matches the compositional character of the paintings. There is a playful, wild and unexpected energy running through Sarah and the room when you are in the studio with her. She is always on the move, trying things out, speaking quickly and off the cuff, directly. She manifests the dancer, or boxer, a kind of whirlwind. She likes to question the existing and explore the possible.

It is no coincidence then that she always works on pieces simultaneously and in series. Surrounded by large and smaller canvases, they are like sheets of music spread out for a large, coherent symphony, which are tinkered with and all completed at the same time, just before the "deadline". "Intuitively", she says, "I am drawn towards the off-kilter, out of tune, tilted, crumpled and bent."

Bringing life drawing into her practice has allowed Dwyer, as she says, to recognise the vulnerability of her own body (and all our bodies) and what it means to be her, in an ever changing female body that has at times had to go to war with itself. "I want to embrace the seams, creases and the cracks of flesh, the weight and the lines that traverse the skin. This exploration of my own relationship with the body and by confronting the experiences of which the body keeps score, means that I am able to scrutinise the distinctly female burden to 'carry it with you on both your hips and your shoulders.'" In this way, her expanded drawing practice becomes a tripartite act of survival, celebration, and achievement.