

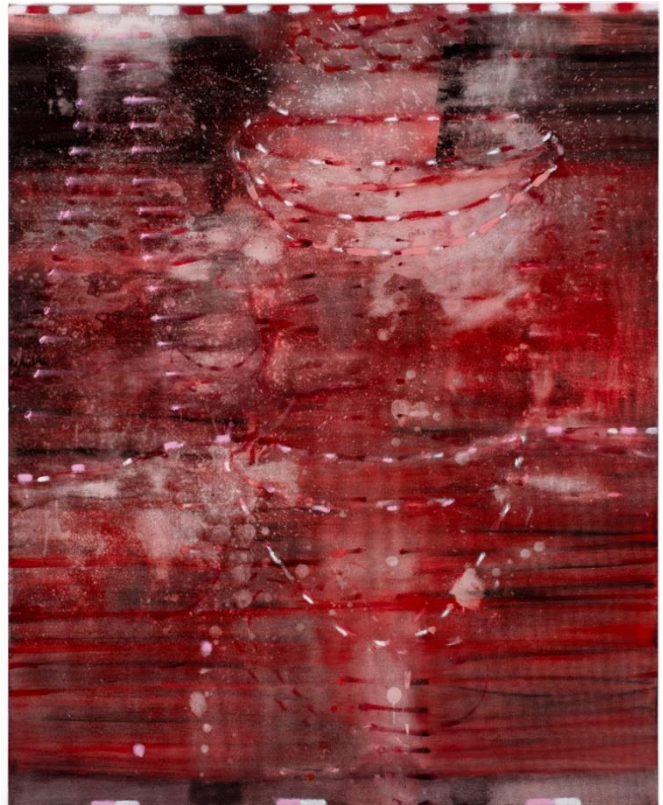
PRESS RELEASE

VIRGINIA VERRAN

AUTONOMY

PAINTINGS & DRAWINGS

15 March - 26 April 2024

A 56 page catalogue with an essay by
[Martin Herbert view online](#)*Angelico Red (Aspirant I)*, 2021, oil on canvas, 121 x 92 cm

We are delighted to announce an exhibition of paintings and drawings by Virginia Verran. It will feature new and earlier work and include two seminal paintings that date back to 2007 which chart the continuity of vision and grandeur of her large complex compositions.

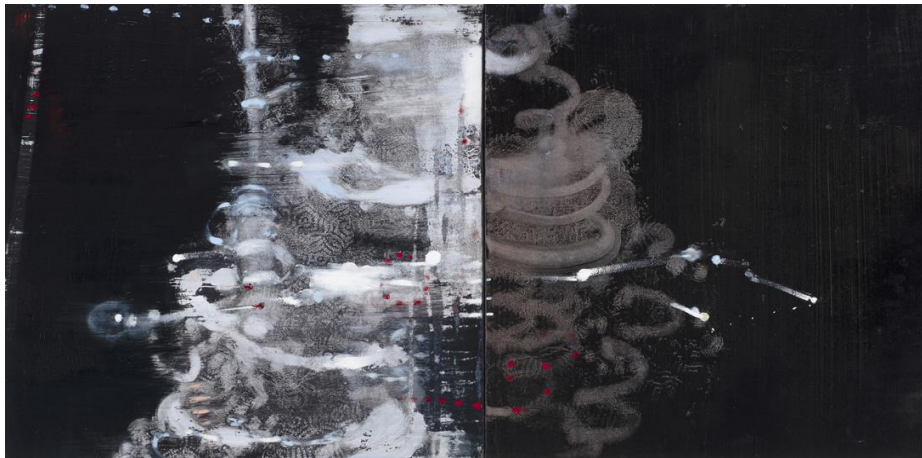
In an exchange of correspondence with Richard Kendal in 2019 he wrote: '*Blue-Grey (lament)* is quite wonderful... I'm fascinated by – among other features – what seems to be an extreme juxtaposition between flatness and depth, which you have experimented with before. But now you appear to be taking this further to create an elusive space that I feel I could walk into.'

And herein lies the essence of Verran's paintings. Measuring upwards of 92 x 78 inches they are filled with light in a striking and unusual way. It is a light that resides deep within the interior of the painting and far beyond the surface, or the outer membrane as she refers to it. And on this membrane sequences of graphic signs very often appear that suggest boundaries, hills, islands, little bombs, ladders, tiny buildings or chequered patterned fields. There is no narrative but the structure of each painting becomes clearer once we consider how these paintings have been made. How all of the elements are fitted together.

First, the canvas is covered evenly with a layer of thin pigment brushed deep into the weave of the cloth. Then begins a protracted period of rubbing back to reverse the process and remove areas of paint. With the canvas sometimes on the floor and sometimes on the wall, turpentine is poured over the surface which is then mopped and scrubbed with absorbent paper to reveal the lightly stained canvas. And this extremely physical process is repeated over and over again, accident and chance playing their part, until finally an image is coaxed into being; a free floating and undefined form, or series of forms, that sit at the heart of the space; the internal light of the painting, more vaporous than corporeal but suggestive of a human presence.

This will take many days after which the painting begins its next phase with the addition of images and patterning. Layers of dots, striped lines or chequered areas are applied to the surface of the painting along with sequences of imagined forms and places that zoom in and out of different perspectives, from the ground or the air or from space. Borderlands between far flung countries may be suggested; small islands in vast seas or deep space where glinting lights illuminate the darkness. If there is an underlying sense of anxiety it is balanced with an equal sense of levity and a lightness of touch.

Autonomy, the title of this exhibition, generally means the ability to make informed and uncoerced decisions; a freedom from external control or influence; independence. The work in this exhibition spans 15 years during which time Virginia Verran has continued to chart her own independent vision. Richard Kendal, in his catalogue essay for the Henie-Onstad exhibition pointed out that, 'Whatever else her complex artistic activity involves, it thrives on extremity and caprice, on utter seriousness lightly camouflaged and wit lurking in sobriety'.



Double-Black (Double-Back), 2006, oil on canvas (diptych), 60 x 120 cm

Virginia Verran was born in Cornwall (1961) and trained at Winchester School of Art (1980-83) and Chelsea College of Art and Design (1983-84). She has exhibited in France, Holland, Germany, China, Japan and extensively in the UK in group and solo exhibitions most notably with Francis Graham-Dixon Gallery (1987-95). In public galleries, there have been solo exhibitions in Newlyn Gallery, Cornwall (1997) and a major retrospective at Henie-Onstad Kunstsenter, Norway (1999) curated by Gavin Jantjes that filled three galleries.

She has also exhibited in the Liverpool John Moores (2009 & 2018), won the 1st prize in the Jerwood Drawing Prize (2010) and received a Pollock Krasner Award (2022).

Public collections that hold her work include Arts Council, Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge, Hepworth Wakefield and private collections in the UK, New York, Holland, Germany, France, Norway and Japan.

She has held teaching posts at University of Arts (Chelsea, London), Falmouth University, Slade School of Art, Newcastle University and currently teaches on the Turps Offsite Programme and the Turps Correspondence Course.