



Amy Stephens. Arcana

14 Feb–16 Mar 2014 at Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery, London



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You are surrounded by colour, vivid photographs, vibrant canvases and shiny, copper sculpture. And then, amongst this sea of visual stimulation, there is non colour, pastel and cream working their way in, as arresting as their neighbours for their sheer contrast. Symbols and shapes vie with each other for your attention – some obscured, others arresting, and yet more hidden in plain sight. Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery is pleased to present Arcana, a group show bringing together the works of Gemma Nelson, Martine Poppe and Amy Stephens. Running from 14 February – 16 March 2014, the exhibition also draws on the mystic origins of the word ‘arcana’ as a celebration of secrets and mysteries and a reflection upon positive spiritual sensitivity. Imagine the scene: a lonely fair ground waits patiently in the night, the word ‘Baloonride’ (sic), lighting up the surrounding desert darkness like a soft beacon of memories and days gone by. Nearby, a tondo painted in vibrant inks is witness to intricate shapes, a myriad colours and forms blooming across the canvas, stretching out and multiplying to create a psychedelic universe. Hanging in contrast to these bursts of colour are soft, hazy portraits, representational paintings that play on diversity and repetition – the images within them serene, abstracted, floating behind milky

veils of paint. While different in style, medium and execution, the works are brought together by a unifying sense of spirituality as well as the notion of the revealed and concealed, of portals and the mystical.

Amy Stephens presents all new works that have been inspired by a recent residency in the Sultanate of Oman in late 2013. Working in abstraction, Stephens often creates minimalist line drawings and sculptures that invade and interact with the architectural space in which they are installed. Within the context of Arcana, her works respond to the ideas of tradition and myth explored within Nelson's work, while their play on perspective and abstract nature are at harmony with those of Poppe. Here, we see a line drawing protruding from the gallery wall, metamorphosing the boundaries between the two and three-dimensional. Moved by the many traditional doors painted in an around the city of Muscat, Stephens has created a portal pared right back to a simple elegant copper line. From nearly 100 photographs taken in the Gulf, Stephens has chosen two images that highlight an open and closed doorway respectively. Furthermore, both the abandoned fair ground of Baloonrace and the multicoloured painted locked mountain door from the remote village of Misfat Al-Abreyeen, are images inspired by Aldous Huxley, in particular, his assertion that "there are things known and there are thing unknown, and in between are the doors of perception." Using a range of fabrics and forms, she invites viewers to question this barrier and its in-between space. In doing so, the association of the door as an everyday object is thrown off kilter, out of context and into a state of flux.

Amy Stephens was born in 1981 in London. He attended Chelsea College of Art and Design, from where she received her MA in Fine Art in 2008. Prior to this she received her BA (Hons) in Fine Art from the University of Reading in 2005. She has attended residencies in Oman, Ireland, Canada and Iceland, among others, and has exhibited as far and wide as Sweden, Ireland, Italy, Poland and Spain, including the solo exhibitions A Light Less Ordinary at the Aldeburgh Beach South Lookout, Aldeburgh, Suffolk, UK and Catching the Big Fish, Minibar Artist Space, Stockholm, Sweden (both 2013). She has been the recipient of numerous awards and commissions, including the Triangle Network Award, Muscat, Oman, in association with Gasworks Gallery, London, UK (2013) and a four month artist's residency at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (2011). Her work can be found in public and private collections in the UK, USA, Ireland and Poland.

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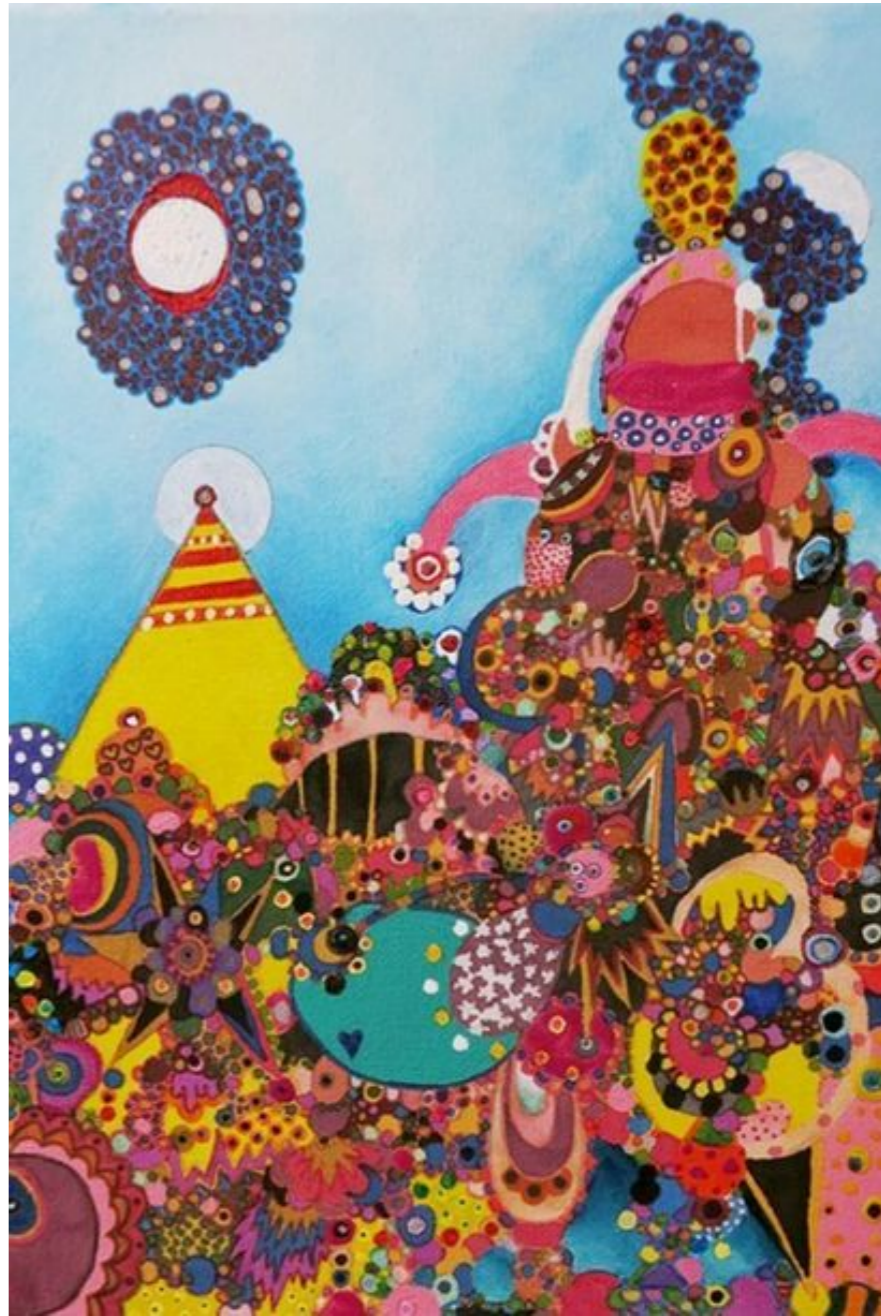
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