

Timothy Taylor



Willem de Kooning, *Untitled, XVI* (detail), 1983. Oil on canvas, 77 × 88 in. (195.6 × 223.5 cm)
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Hovering on the Edge

21 March — 20 April 2024
15 Bolton Street, London

Timothy Taylor is pleased to present *Hovering on the Edge*, a group exhibition that situates eleven contemporary artists in relation to the legacy of Willem de Kooning's late period at the gallery's London location. Spanning genres and decades, this exhibition brings together a curated selection of artists who explore the ways in which line, colour, and form transcend and create new pictorial languages.

Ceaselessly reinventive, de Kooning continued to innovate up until the final years of his career. He revisited his early work with the distinctive simplicity of Henri Matisse's oeuvre in mind, identifying the lines and colours that scaffolded prior instances of his bravado brushwork. Distilled to the essentials, these radically reductive paintings were denounced by critic Deborah Solomon who remarked that they “hover on the edge of emptiness,” no more passing “for fully realized compositions than a blueprint can pass for a house.” Yet *Untitled XVI* (1983) is the artist at his most judicious. Each gesture appears measured and restrained, coalescing and rippling across the placid canvas. The result—fragmentary allusions to landscapes or feminine curves—galvanized a new mode of abstracted representation, which pervades the work in this show.

In the exhibition, Antonia Showering's *Compartmentalise* (2024) and Richard Patterson's *Ghosts* (2023) emulate de Kooning's elusive forms by obscuring their subjects behind passages of painterly abstraction while Daniel Crews-Chubb's *Immortal XXIV (blue, white and orange)* (2024) builds up impasto to achieve loosely figural idols and deities. Aptly named, George Condo's *The Bridge* (2022) straddles expressive portraiture and frenzied mark-making. Further iterations of this style, such as Marina Adams' graphic geometry or Landon Metz's lyrical ebbs, hinge on de Kooning's masterful execution of line and colour.

Cecily Brown and emerging artist Okiki Akinfe cite their reverence for de Kooning, crediting their dynamic gestures to his technique. Enamoured with his work since her days at the Slade School of Fine Art, Brown recalls that it "was exhilarating to see somebody use paint in a way that appeared to be free, but obviously there was this great measure of control." In *There is a land of pure delight* (2019–20), she launches a barrage of strokes, streaks, and smears to intoxicating effect. Carnal and ruddy, the work explores the theme of physicality. John Chamberlain, a contemporary of de Kooning, extends this concept to the third dimension in his well-known bent steel sculptures. The orange and cerulean arcs of *Untitled XVI* seem to solidify and warp into the metallic striations of Chamberlain's *Splendid Actor* (1989). Elsewhere, David Reed echoes de Kooning's fluidity, seeking to dismantle the barrier between automatic gesture and systematic application of paint. By juxtaposing his brushstrokes with digitally produced stencils, Reed challenges the necessity of the artist to manipulate form by hand and explores the coexistence of different methodologies. Annice Fell elaborates on this theme through her intuitive practice of coating unique, textured monoprints with oil and oil pastel.

Hovering on the Edge invites viewers to consider the infinite formal, visual, and technical possibilities within abstract art. The featured artists respond to and expand on de Kooning's aesthetic foundation, charging forward with ideas and methods all their own.

Press Enquiries

Juliet Smith juliet@reiberpr.com +44 7841 426 500