

**Phillip Allen – Roger Kelly**  
**Preview Thursday 29th April at 6 pm**  
**30<sup>th</sup> April to 15<sup>th</sup> July 2010**

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**Wednesday to Friday from 2 to 8pm**  
**Saturday from 10.30am to 8pm**

British painting has achieved remarkable strength in the first decade of the new century. That strength has come partly from the determination of painters to drive their medium forward through institutionalised scepticism about the desirability of its survival at the top table of artistic discourse, and partly from a new enthusiasm among artists of a certain age and maturity for the wonder of paint as material and the stuff of creativity.

Phillip Allen and Roger Kelly are proponents of painting. Having passed through with cool minds the hot-headed frenzy of expectation that the overheated community of writers, collectors and curators have insinuated upon recent graduates, they are making the best work of their lives in their late thirties and into their forties.

Phillip Allen duels with the concept of originality, observing creativity as a synthesis of what may already exist, a situation he intensifies with versions of his own work that perpetrate altered perspectives on a known motif. He has developed an idiosyncratic language of divergent textures, patterns and shapes reminiscent of cartoon imagery. He paints in terms that are blunt and sharp at the same time, capable of transporting notions of sophistication and of just passing the time.

Kelly approaches the blank ground (in his case unstretched canvas pinned to his studio wall) through a process carried out almost entirely in black and white. He constructs a loosely pictorial area from images assembled from an array of sources (his own photographs, magazines, other art) that is manipulated by cutting, collaging, reducing and drawing, copying, enlarging and transferring.

Neither painter can be described as abstract. For both, 'pictoriality' is a relevant concept while narrative remains a valid possibility. Allen has little time for the distinctions between 'non-objective' and 'representational' (and the salami-slicing of gradations between the two). He effectively straddles both poles in his attempt to make painting that interests him. Kelly, it seems, is more aware of these categories. For him they calibrate an aesthetic scale; it is not one of quality or value but of volume, intensity and intimacy.

Their affiliations are made known through their work. The viewer's gaze is greeted with a spectrum of enquiries: some assent to convention while others, the majority, complicate it, subvert expectations and propose insistent arguments for another way of looking. Looking so real that it strains the eye and stains memory. Looking that raises questions that spill through that membrane into how the world beyond gets lived.

Martin Holman, March 2010