

Industrial evolution

Michael Jeffery

Review: Jena Woodburn

Michael Jeffery's abstract paintings draw heavily on the urban landscape, their graphical components referencing elements of the industrial environment from graffiti to freight containers to road signage.

The physical components of the works include Jeffery's trademark acrylic 'skins' – flat slices of brightly coloured paint, which are layered onto the canvas.

Formed separately from the painting, they are made by applying thick coats of acrylic paint to a plastic surface, letting the paint dry, and peeling off the resulting 'skin'.

The vibrant blue, yellow, red, green, black and white panels are then adhered to the canvas, used to build up the surface of the painting.

Combined with these blocks of colour are photographic images.

In keeping with the urban theme, they depict road signs and graffiti, close-up images of asphalt surfaces and painted-on stencils.

Rather than using the photographs themselves, Jeffery utilises a transfer process that lifts the image from the photograph and embeds it in a gel medium.

This thick, pliable substance is similar in texture to the paint skins, allowing the images to be integrated relatively seamlessly and maintaining the homogeneity of the work's surface.

In addition to these other elements, Jeffery also uses enamel spray paint on the surface of the paintings.

This is applied either in the form of stencilled letters and numbers, reminiscent of shipping labels or freight instructions, or sketched free-hand like graffiti, whose ambiguous fragments of words leave much unexplained about their origin or intent.

The works in fact could be walls, infinitely tagged and painted and patched, or perhaps crates or shipping containers, perpetually labelled and relabelled, sealed and reopened, shunted and scratched.

As such, they make graphic, bold objects that are full and busy with references to urban culture and the grit of the everyday.

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