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## MELA YERKA What red blue is in?

Painting resides in a sphere of abstract thinking, irrespective of whether it is figurative or abstract. In Mela Yerka's new series of work, she experiments with a variety of materials, paints and techniques. Exploring different historical motifs and extending on her previous studies, Yerka demonstrates how her work expands on the possibilities and notion of painting, challenging herself, our ways of looking and art history.

The exhibition centres on the biographies of feral children, their stories spanning over time and continents. Years of fascination with these stories and children stem from not only how their perception of the world differs, but also how their carers and society are fascinated by them and try to 're-civilise' the children, often only to fuel our own rescue fascination. With failure a crucial part of an artist's practice, what is displayed can be seen as the limits of depiction, the futility of conveying aspects of our subjective perceptions.

Most of the feral children have lacked abstract thinking and as painting is an abstract concept, the children cannot see what is depicted. In viewing the paintings, what is portrayed is not simply the story and historical background of these children, but the different, subjective, perhaps inconceivable way that they look. In viewing painting, we do not see the paint, the canvas or the shape, but the complete notion of a painting. With the ability to speak and look formed at the critical period of infancy, it is perhaps not that these children are lacking the ability to perform certain tasks, but more that – no one is able to separate themselves from or distinguish between what has been learnt and what is innate.

With 'Finding of Moses after Luigi Garzi', the canvas is unprimed and paint is replaced with bleach. Where painting is conceived as a process of adding to the canvas, here the process is reversed, with the removal of substance becoming the tool for depiction.

A further absence is seen in 'Genie', where the canvas is a section of velvet, devoid of paint. Brushstrokes on the surface of the velvet leave traces of lines and shading, and the image remaining is both difficult to conceive and temporal. Other works, painted with a more familiar technique of oil and egg tempera, borrow landscapes from historical paintings, copying in older references that are present from our preceding exposure to landscape paintings from years past.

Mela Yerka was born in Poland and lives and works in London. After studying at the Academy of Fine Arts, Warsaw, she graduated from Central St Martins College of Art, London, in 2011. For further information and images, please contact Nathan Jenkins, nathan@mariastenfors.com

Private view: Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> January 2013, 6.30-8.30pm  
Exhibition dates: 11<sup>th</sup> January – 16<sup>th</sup> February 2013  
Opening times: Tue-Fri 11-6, Sat 11-3, or by appointment