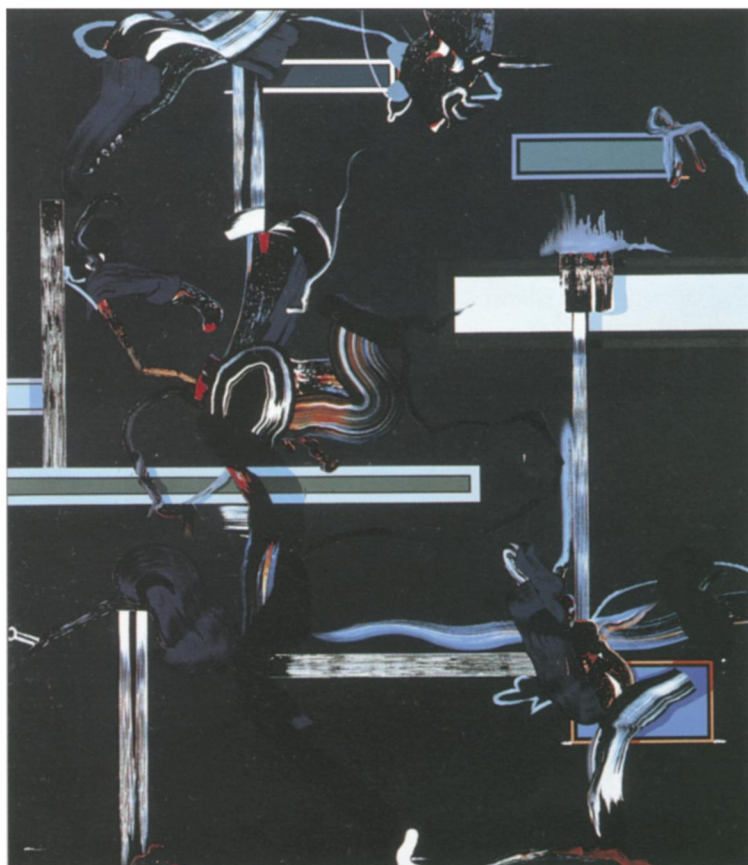


145. *Creature*, by Fiona Rae. 1998. Oil and acrylic, 243.8 by 213.4 cm. (Artist's collection; exh. Carré d'art, Nîmes).



a game in which the rules are constantly changing, but the sparkling excitement of the play is such that we do not notice the lack of a score. Lots of moves might produce nothing, but that too has its place, can even be the most exciting part of the game. Failure here would be boredom.

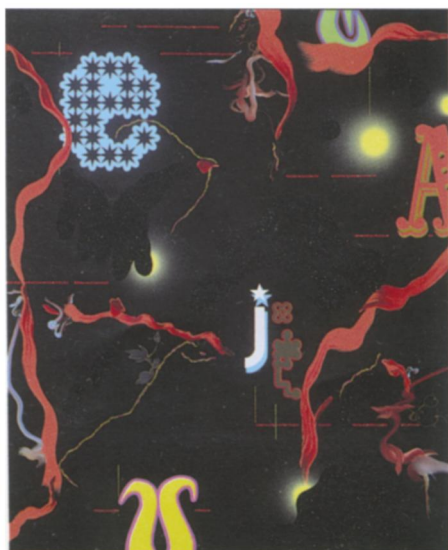
The critical literature around Rae's work (and she has contributed to this through interviews) invokes the terms of 'chaos' held in check by 'organisation'. Secondly, it reiterates an emphasis on building blocks, the conventions of a lan-

guage, alphabet or vocabulary. Critical theory has for many years been fascinated by semiotics in a linguistic context, but the necessary conventions of painting have always been as much indebted to the semiotics of gesture, in which concepts allied to language, alphabet or vocabulary seem much less important. Gesture tends to be more personal, more grounded in aesthetics. I think gesture provides not only a more helpful key than language to the gestalt of Rae's work but also proposes a counter-concept to that of 'organisation' versus 'chaos'.

In the context of the presence in Nîmes of paintings by Polke and Frize, Rae's work looked contrived, deliberate and self-conscious in an English way. This sense of self-awareness gives a clue as to how to dispense with that word 'organisation', so redolent of the filing cabinet. Rae's 'accidents' might start as aleatory emanations of the unconscious, but their meaning for us is as gestures that are both wilful and hugely conscious. Not organised, but wilfully capricious, they become a magnificent and self-sustaining caprice, a gesture solely composed of gestures.

¹ Catalogue: *Fiona Rae*. Texts by Jean-Pierre Criqui and Simon Wallis. 135 pp. incl. 50 col. pls. + 5 b. & w. figs. (Carré d'art, Musée d'art contemporain de Nîmes, 2002), €32. ISBN 2-907650-28-9.

² Rae (b.1963), a participant in *Freeze* in London in 1988, held her first solo exhibition in 1990 (in Glasgow and Nice) and was included that year in the touring *British Art Show* and in *Aperto* at the Venice Biennale. Her first solo show in London was at the Waddington Galleries in 1991.



146. *Jacaranda*, by Fiona Rae. 2002. Oil, acrylic and glitter, 231.1 by 190.5 cm. (Galerie Nathalie Obadin, Paris; exh. Carré d'art, Nîmes).

Tacita Dean Düsseldorf and New York

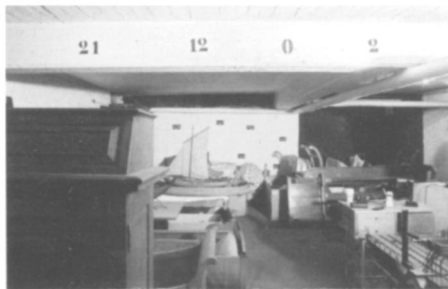
by LYNNE COOKE, *Dia Center for the Arts, New York*

A DATE in the guise of a palindrome suggests a portentous moment: Janus-like, it invites both reminiscence and anticipation while remaining firmly hinged to the present. Copies of the five European newspapers (Fig.147), all from 20th February 2002, for which Tacita Dean redesigned the typeface and layout under a distinctive bold heading, '20 02 2002', were installed at the threshold to her recent show in the **Kunstverein, Düsseldorf** (which then travelled to the **Marian Goodman Gallery, New York**, closed 8th February).¹ As anonymous insertions into the daily chronicling of world events, Dean's modest interventions set the scene for her exhibition. While this particular format is new in her work, recourse to an apparently mundane artefact or quotidian episode, presented so that it will be encountered almost casually, has been an abiding strategy. Likewise, a single faded postcard placed by the entrance to the gallery, served as both prologue and epilogue to the show. The card's vertiginous view, shot from the crow's nest of a ship, bears the impassioned salutation 'It's a great life if you don't weaken'. Latent with densely imbricated thematics, even her most unassuming works insinuate themselves into the viewer's mind to reverberate there with enduring potency.

Dean capitalised on the occasion of her Düsseldorf show to pay tribute to Marcel Broodthaers whose memorable solo exhibition, *Das Adler von Oligonon bis Heute* had also been hosted, some thirty years earlier,



147. *Palindrome*, by Tacita Dean. 2002. Project for daily newspapers; one of five pages, each 65 by 48 cm. (Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York; exh. Kunstverein, Düsseldorf).



148. *Section Cinema*, by Tacita Dean. 2002. Still from 16 mm. colour film. (Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York; exh. Kunstverein, Düsseldorf).

by the Düsseldorf Kunstverein. Although this Belgian artist's show *Musée d'art moderne, Département des Aigles* was only part of a larger enterprise, it proved a landmark within his career and in the history of the art of that period as a whole. The suspicion that the poetic prankster played Virgil to Tacita Dean's Dante in the conception of her exhibition, titled, tellingly, *12 10 02 – 21 12 02*, stemmed not only from the show's moniker but from several works she made for the occasion, in particular a short film, *Section cinema* (Fig. 148). In what is now a storage facility containing various model ships reclining on piles of miscellaneous furniture, Dean has created a wistful portrait of a place that was used by Broodthaers as the site for one of his key cinematic pieces, and as the studio in which he planned his own show, subtitled 'Section Figures', for the Kunstverein. Dean's camera lingers reverentially on details of the architecture where Broodthaers' stencilled traces of such recurrent notations as 'fig.1', 'fig.12' and 'fig.A', may be glimpsed before halting on the numbers 21 12 02 painted on a ceiling beam, which she had fortuitously discovered in January 2002. While this ruminative projection pays overt homage to her forebear, *Chère petite sœur* (Fig. 149), made *in situ* in the Kunstverein's gallery, was more elliptical in

its address. Comprised of two large blackboards, it may be read as a truncated storyboard for a feature film, the tale of an imminent shipwreck, and as a monumental *grisaille* drawing. Almost obscured within the momentous seas rolling around the vessel are several brief texts: vestigial messages addressed to her melancholy mentor; terse directives to any future film-maker of what promises to be a rhetorically clichéd tragedy; and those talismanic initials 'MB'.

Interweaving some of her earliest work with her most recent, Dean's exhibition reflected the oneirically elliptical, playfully associative strategies by means of which Broodthaers composed cryptic works that wed the like and radically unlike, the visual and verbal, the found and invented. Among the most memorable, *Washington Cathedral* (Fig. 150), comprised some eighty postcards that Dean found in a flea-market, printed in the late nineteenth century in anticipation of the erection of the huge church planned for the nation's capital. All depict the visionary building from one of two virtually canonical views yet each reproduction of this thoroughly conventional neo-gothic design is slightly different, the variations depending on incidents and accidents of printing as much as on such decorative embellishments as supplementary foliage, changes in season or time of day, or appended captions. These cards, normally souvenirs of places visited, invoked what could at that moment only be anticipated, a paradox enhanced by the fact that the quasi-medieval form and style of the religious monument was heavily freighted with revisionist signifiers. By conjuring up *faux* memories of what could plausibly have already existed, these views metamorphosed a future site/sight into a memorial. Salvaged serendipitously and displayed almost a century later, the series overlays past and future in a dizzying temporal fantasy.

Such preoccupations have permeated Dean's practice from the start, as could be



150. *Washington Cathedral*, by Tacita Dean. 2002. Found postcards, each 14 by 9 cm. (Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York; exh. Kunstverein, Düsseldorf).

seen in the earliest works in the show, *Ztrata* (1991–2002) and *Czech photos* (1991–2002), both realised in Düsseldorf for the first time. In the former (a short black-and-white film made on a brief trip to Prague at the beginning of the 1990s), words are inscribed on a blackboard and then effaced by a cloth which suddenly sails through an open window, to drift down into the street below, like a wave of farewell. The ephemeral text had spelt out in Polish words such as 'presence', 'absence' and 'loss', notions which the eraser then literally acts out. Another short film, *Diamond ring* (2002), projected exceptionally this time in the well-lit gallery rather than sequestered in a darkened chamber, is a brief segment of a recent eclipse of the sun. A portentous rending in normality, this



149. *Chère petite sœur*, by Tacita Dean. 2002. Chalk on blackboard, each panel 487 by 975 cm. (Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, New York; exh. Kunstverein, Düsseldorf).

uncanny moment of obliteration invokes 'the idea of a gap or break in the universe, an idea that is almost impossible to bear', as Susan Stewart has written.² Also imbued with this show's signature tone of haunting pathos are the 'snap-shots' that Dean took during her stay in Prague, several hundred of which have been placed in a small wooden box for viewers to peruse at their leisure.

A carefully calibrated ensemble, *12 10 02 – 21 12 02* encompasses many of Dean's long-standing concerns, most notably with past and projected time, with travel both imaginary and hypothetical, and with coincidence and serendipity as keys to unlock the deeper structures of fantasy and fabulation. Not only do her subjects, including those associated with the sea and sailing, but also her preferred media which range from film to photography, books, postcards and related ephemera, find close counterparts in Broodthaers's *œuvre*. Never before has Dean paid such extended homage to another artist.³ The founder of an imaginary museum (which had its debut in that legendary show at the Düsseldorf Kunstverein), Broodthaers is revered as the avatar of poignantly astute deconstructions of museological practice and for his quizzical scrutiny of the interdependence of verbal and visual languages of representation. Seldom, however, has he been celebrated, as he was here, for the deceptively whimsical, poetic ploys by which he tracked the more ungovernable musings of memory and speculation.

¹ Catalogue: *Tacita Dean. 12.10.02 – 21.12.02*. Text by Rita Kersting. 32 pp. incl. 41 col. pls. + 52 b. & w. ills. (Kunstverein, Düsseldorf, 2002), €12. Most of the works mentioned in this review were also shown, albeit differently configured, at the Marian Goodman Gallery, along with Dean's film *Fernsehturm* (2001), not previously shown in the U.S.

² S. Stewart: 'The Light of Banewl', in *Tacita Dean*, exh. cat., Tate Britain, London 2001, p.48.

³ A notable precedent in her *œuvre* is the two works, *From Columbus, Ohio, to the partially buried woodshed* (1999) and *Trying to find the Spiral Jetty* (1997), made in relation to Robert Smithson's *Buried woodshed* (1968) and *Spiral Jetty* (1970).

Edwin Dickinson Philadelphia and New York

by DAVID ANFAM

AN UNWRITTEN CURATORIAL law seems to dictate that some modern artists do not travel and therefore cannot be exported from their native habitats. By this logic, L.S. Lowry or Carel Weight are fine for British audiences but do not play in Peoria or New York. Likewise, Ivan Albright looks great in Chicago – just as, say, Jess and Rufino Tamayo may succeed in the U.S.A. and Mexico – even as none is deemed altogether suitable for the London climate. Quality is often said to be the reason for excluding such transatlantic



151. *Ruin at Daphne*, by Edwin Dickinson. 1943–53. 121.9 by 152.4 cm. (Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; exh. National Academy of Design, New York).

immigrants. An equally probable cause, however, derives from the legacy of international modernism. Modernist criteria, of course, had allocated key players to various avant-garde 'isms' and ranked them ahead of both their academic counterparts and those individuals who happened to resist

categorisation and thus were considered provincial and/or eccentric. The fine Edwin Dickinson retrospective, seen by this reviewer at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Philadelphia, and now at the **National Academy of Design, New York** (to 13th April), is a classic illustration



152. *The fossil hunters*, by Edwin Dickinson. 1926–28. 245.1 by 187.3 cm. (Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; exh. National Academy of Design, New York).