

# SEANKELLY

Stott, Tim. "Callum Innes: Unforeseen," *ArtReview*, December 2012.

## ArtReview

Callum Innes: *Unforeseen*  
Kerlin Gallery, Dublin  
7 September – 13 October

**It's an enduring problem:** how certain pictorial resources, or the imaging capacities of paint, come up against certain material conditions of painting. The title of Callum Innes's show at the Kerlin, *Unforeseen*, acknowledges the contingencies variously engaged in addressing this issue. And it remains something of a puzzle how these surfaces end up as they are – fluid yet taut, silken or unctuous, full of mineral incident and sparks of contingency – and not otherwise. The paintings only give up so much about the history of their making. In response to a problem, then, less a solution than an intrigue.

Innes is best known for making a pictorial resource of the volatile and corrosive qualities of turpentine. The 'exposure' to turps of measured applications of oil paint results, according to the different series on show here, either in hanging skeins of pigment carried earthward at variable rates of dissolution and sedimentation or in muted transparencies barely distinct from the grounds they stain. *Exposed Painting Lamp Black* (2012) is of the former type. On its exposed right half, a dun spate of pigment has eroded an edge into this most obstinate of blacks. The painting appears resolved. Facing it at the far end of the gallery, *Exposed Painting Dioxazine Violet* (2012) is of the same series but appears irresolute by comparison. An excited violet snags on the tooth of the gessoed linen and separates in lateral, alluvium bands. This leaves a quintuple image of variable luminosities and haptic values, each of its parts edgily correlated to the others.

The problem can be rephrased, then, as how to relate image to object, or internal luminosity to external lighting. Innes talks of the image becoming part of the history of the material. We return to the puzzle: trying to infer that history. Consider the edges encountered in the pair *Untitled No. 5* and *Untitled No. 9* (both 2012). Here



**Callum Innes**  
*Exposed Painting Dioxazine Violet*, 2012, oil on linen,  
195 x 195 cm.  
Courtesy Kerlin Gallery, Dublin

colour was applied to an entire surface and then dissolved from most of it to leave a tall block of colour and a rubbed, tinted white. With *Untitled No. 9* the remaining red stops at the canvas edge neatly, necessarily. The frayed edge where red meets white is contingent, the contact initiating an image, differentiating virtual space from surface. Along the other canvas edge, inadvertent remainders of the same material, dissolved pigment, are more object than image. One orients oneself by these edges (like Barnett Newman's zips, but without the rhetoric; verticals arrived at rather than declared), one approaches and turns about them, which explains why Innes calls himself a figurative painter even as he eschews depiction. In some sense, bodies align.

Turpentine is a highly fallible resource. Innes edits and reworks. What works, what fails – these are elusive judgements, but scrutinising the delicate difference between two whites, applied paint and exposed gesso, separated by a splintering black edge in *Untitled No. 18* (2012), I cannot help but think that it does work, in a way that is still somewhat inscrutable, astonishingly economical, and intriguing.

**TIM STOTT**