



RACHEL DEACON



Stephanie, 61 x 76cm

Inspiration comes from the most unexpected places. In the case of Rachel Deacon, her artistic career was sent in a completely different direction by...a home extension.

When the construction was complete and the builders had left, Rachel was left with a huge blank wall. It was crying out for a big canvas, a statement abstract work. So Rachel went shopping for exactly the right piece. But nothing worked. "Everything I looked at was awful," she remembers. "It was all too decorative. I wanted something dynamic, with movement and detail."

So she decided to have a go herself. It wasn't easy. 30 years after graduating from Chelsea School of Art, Rachel had built a successful career around purely figurative work. Indeed, her three shows with the Catto have been a showcase for these paintings, every one bursting with narrative intrigue, drama and secrets.

And now here she was, trying to focus purely on form and aesthetics. "It took months," she says. "I had to fight to stop real images appearing in the work. It was a struggle. But eventually I kind of 'moved the tiles around' and came up with something I liked."

This could have been a one-off project. But friends loved the abstract work, and when Rachel painted more, they sold instantly. Also, she felt creatively invigorated by the new direction. "It demands a totally different approach from my figurative paintings," she says. "After 30 years, I know that process inside out. But with the abstract painting, I have no idea how long a work will take or what direction it will go in. It's really thrilling. It's like I'm using a different part of my brain."

Of course, Rachel has no intention of abandoning the figurative painting that she is so well-known for. And this new show proves what a rich well that still is. All the key ingredients remain. The collection is full of outrageously sexy women, some of whom recline in languid splendour, while others engage in mysterious trysts, whispering secrets to each other.

So, is there any connection between the two 'schools' of Rachel Deacon? The artist says that friends tell her they can see some stylistic link. And Rachel concedes that she wants to achieve a similar degree of physicality and vigour in all her work. But when it comes to the process, there is complete separation. In fact, Rachel now has two studios. The 'figurative' location is filled with poems and photos and flowers. The 'abstract' studio almost completely bare.

Oh, but there is one more unifying element in the two approaches. Rachel titles all her abstract work with women's names. She says this is simpler, easier to remember and avoids boring titles like 'form with green'.

We urge you to visit the Catto to see more of Rachel's magnificent figurative paintings, and explore her new abstract work for the first time. And if you have a big wall to fill, maybe Daphne will be just what you need.

To see more paintings from
the exhibition please visit
www.cattogallery.co.uk.



Classical Awakening, 76 x 102cm



The Binding Lavalier, 72 x 91cm



Bibi (diptych), 152 x 102cm each panel



Jeanie, 76 x 102cm



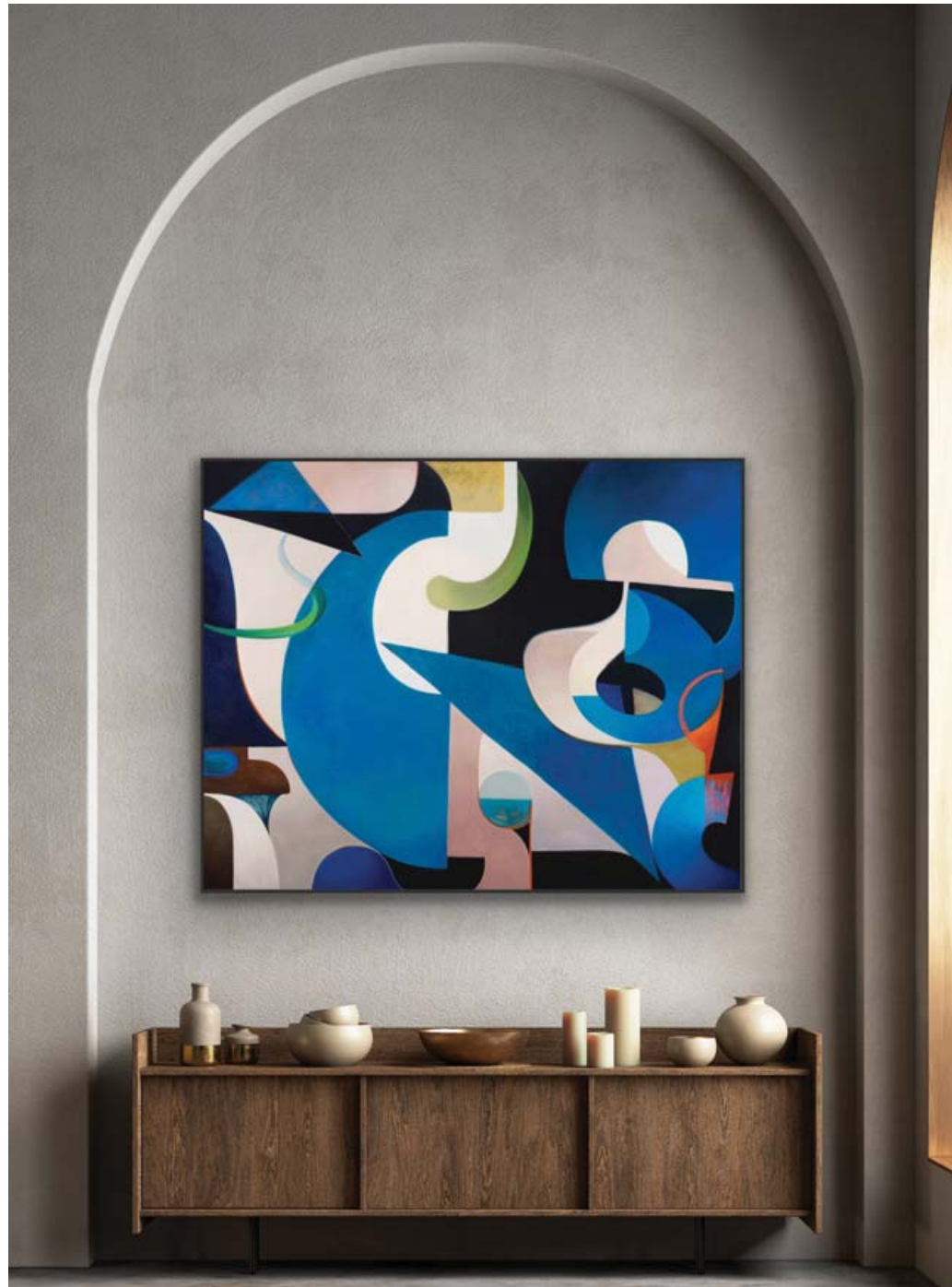
The Promising Debut, 77 x 61cm



A Subtle Introduction, 77 x 61cm



Closing Soirée, 91 x 122cm



Daphne (in situ), 123 x 153



Phyllis, 62 x 46cm



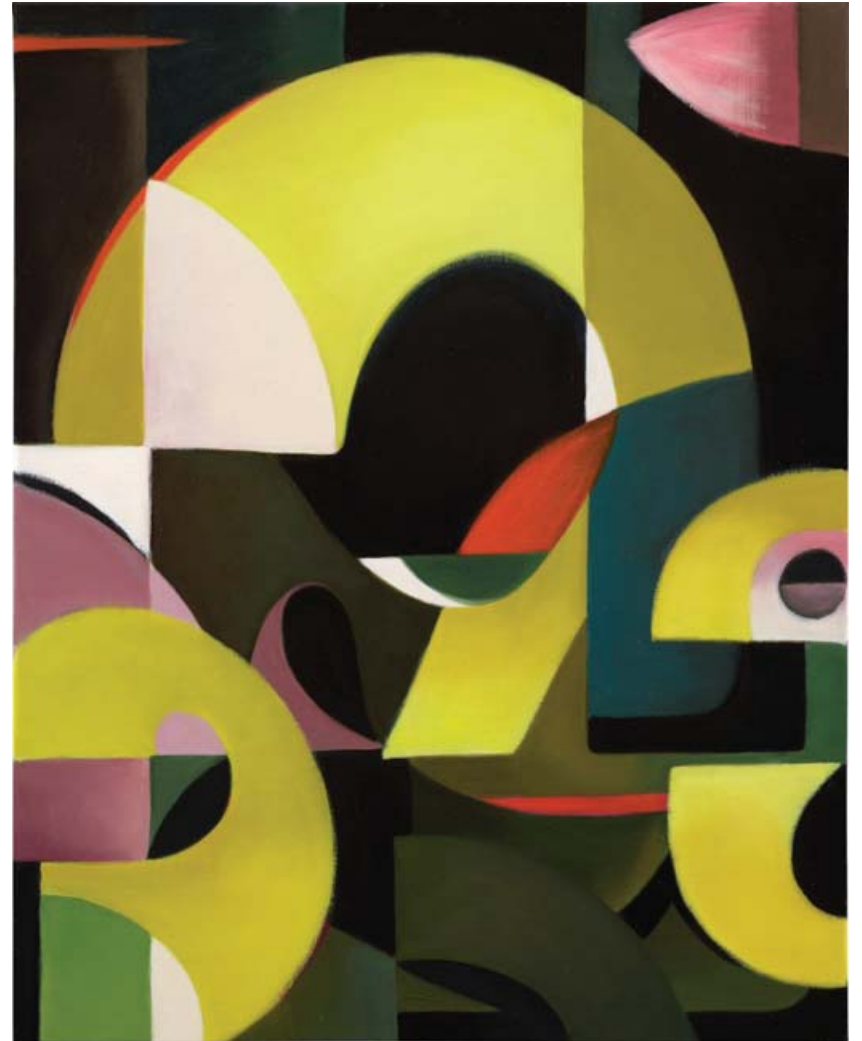
A Slight Departure, 61 x 77cm



The Blue Shoes, 61 x 77cm



Imelda, 76 x 62cm



Fran, 52 x 42cm



Grace (in situ), 123 x 153cm



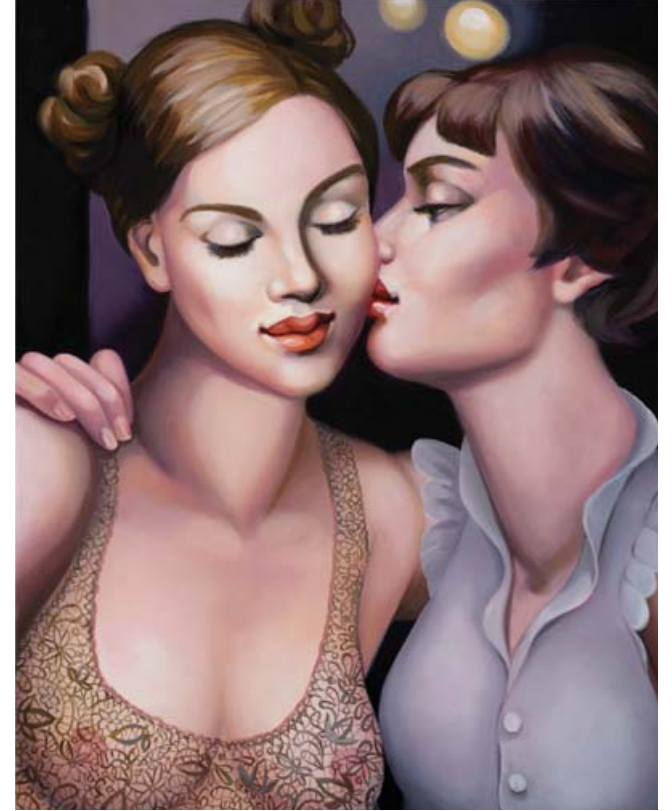
Toni, 61 x 78cm



The Turn of the Tide, 71 x 92cm



Babs, 76 x 102cm



Whisper Kiss, 50 x 40cm



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Opening times: 10am - 5.30pm Mon – Sat

12 - 5pm Sunday • and by appointment

Exhibition dates: 2nd – 30th May 2024