

## PALETTES FROM THE MUSEUM OF ORDURE

Stuart Brisley



*Palette:2, Palettes from The Museum of Ordure* (14/08/2020 – 16/04/2021 Completion)  
Acrylic and matt medium on linen, 50.5 cm x 40 cm.

Palette:2, 2020-21

This work follows on from Palette:1, 2020

The question I ask myself when considering what might follow the previous work (in this instance Palette:1) is usually not straight forward.

This work comes from the consideration of a small number of identical throw away palettes I used recently. I could have used them again but didn't. I might have thrown them away but didn't bother after both the front and back had been used. I tried to remember which palettes had been used for what paintings and failed. They might have ended up in my archive and could still do so. There are five and although I have used temporary palettes in the past I regarded them as something to be dispensed with once the work was over. However, the fact that I did not imagine that they could be the base from which to make an art work or artworks was critical. I just had not thought about it.



***Palette:1, Palettes from The Museum of Ordure*** (2020)  
Acrylic on gesso on canvas, 92 cm x 122 cm.

The interest in making works lay elsewhere. I needed a palette to mix paint on and for no other reason. I did not clean them after each session which is the usual practice because I have worked with acrylic which dries or can dry quickly. When the works were completed on both sides of the foam board I made another identical palette. I cut them from the usable areas of a battered foam board sheet. I previously thought of the palette as a receptacle, a ground for preparation to mix pigments, paints and mediums. The fact that the palettes I used were not cleaned and were replaceable did eventually lead me to consider them as vehicles for the production of works of art. I became fascinated by the prospect of using 'facsimiles' of a thing that was to be part of the process of making and seemingly had no other value.

Several thoughts arose. I found that when looking at them they seemed to have an authority I could not effectively challenge, and yet when I looked at them away from my attempt to reproduce them they reverted to their previous humble condition. I discovered that I could only use those palettes before I became aware that I might use them in the manner described above because I was suspicious of manipulating the palettes for the benefit of future works.

I was briefly fascinated by the prospect of viewers being engaged with imagery that had very little or, no intended aesthetic value. I do not remember when I had the idea of using the palettes. I have also become aware that I should never repeat the conditions of this work. This is a primary decision.

When I made the palettes it was for that sole purpose and therefore I did not think about them in any other way. They were entirely dispensable. It was only when I regarded them as redundant that using them in the way I have done became feasible. My studio is not clean. I work in what some other people might think of as chaos. I spend a certain amount of time looking for specific brushes and particular colours among a certain amount of debris. In the centre of this realm of uncertainties is what I am focused on. I could describe it dramatically as the eye of the storm, but it is more accurate to think of drizzle.

One crux of the issue is the question of consciousness. If I repeated the process it means that I would probably be unable to stop myself influencing the outcome when I use the palette. I am therefore restricted to using the five or six palettes I have before I decided to use them as imagery.

As I understand it I am trying to elevate the mixing process as potentially having an image value independent of whatever bias or prejudices I may have regarding imagery, colour, texture etc. Of course, I am responsible for the mixing, the substance and the initial choice of medium and colour etc I might wish to use in the making of paintings where the palette is just another tool.

This work, Palette:2 can be viewed from all four directions. I have marked just one on the ground that I happened to paint it from that specific position. It has been made to be seen from all four directions. Each position offers something unique to the other three positions. I chose to make it symmetrical for this to happen.

I want to remove myself as far as I can from the precondition of thinking about what to paint and all the paraphernalia that goes with making art works, while persisting in trying to make art.