

# The role of art in a digital world: an interview with Mary Ramsden

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A young British artist who recently graduated from the Royal Academy, London, Mary Ramsden is already making waves with her participation in group shows at institutions such as the Saatchi Gallery (2014) and the Scottish Royal Academy, Edinburgh (2009).

AMA had the chance to speak with Ramsden during the preparations for her first show of 2015, a solo exhibition with her gallery Pilar Corrias, London, open from 23 January until 28 February. Ramsden gave us an insight into her artistic practice and her experimentation with new media.

## **Can you begin by telling us about your artistic background...**

So, I did my degree in Edinburgh from 2004 until 2008, and then my post grad at the Royal Academy from 2010 until 2013.

## **At what point did you begin exhibiting your work in galleries?**

The RA is an amazing platform for young artists, they get some brilliant people through, both artists and critics along with a brilliant support network, so that was a great platform to begin exhibiting. I was also so lucky to start working with Pilar Corrias, the gallery that I'm with, during that time, so that also helps! But in terms of recognition it is still early days.

## **When did you begin creating your abstract compositions?**

I suppose I got my BA and I found that I spent a lot of time dismantling or taking apart larger representational works, and during that process I realised that I was more interested in what it was made of and how I got there and how active those components were. It ended up being a much more interesting process for me.

**What inspired these pieces? And more generally where do you draw inspiration from?**

I don't know, I find inspiration quite a difficult word because I feel like now, a lot of the time in the studio I'm kind of fixing problems from what happened yesterday or even the year before. A lot of it is already contained within the work, the investigative side of stuff, it isn't like I see things and think, 'oh I'll put that in'. My work is more about investigating space within the framework of the artwork and also the way we read space now within a digital framework — the proliferation of images, messages, how do you make something stick these days? How do you make something sit differently? Especially as today we will read a painting in a very different way because the way that we approach images is different these days.

**So how do you see new digital media in the art world?**

Well it certainly has its place and I think it is then quite interesting to see how painting then fits into that story.

**What is it that attracts you to painting as a medium?**

I find it quite difficult I suppose, so I think that is a very generative thing. Also once you're in it you just keep on working through.

**Do you work with any other mediums?**

Yeah, in the studio there are always things happening outside of painting, but I am yet to find a place for them in terms of exhibitions. I don't know either whether they're doing more or less than the paintings yet. I'm often working on little films or arranging chromatic installations in the studio.

**Do you have any future plans to exhibit the work in other mediums at any point?**

Yeah we will have to see! I have been editing some of the films lately that I have been working on for years, it will probably all be decided depending on how they sit with the paintings. But hopefully I will do that at some point but it does feel like a bit of a brave leap!

**So what is it that you're working on right now?**

Well, I'm working towards the show at Pilar Corrias. I've been pushing quite a few different ideas, some of which I have explored for independent projects, so now I'm trying to marry the two worlds that seem to be running through my work at the moment.

**Can you talk in a bit more detail about some of the works in your upcoming show?**

I've been trying to push the idea of different windows open on a screen, then bringing it back to this very handled, painterly sort of thing. The works have quite bright neon edges, I think that it's become a bit of a strange thing because you get a sort of side glow or hum from straight on, and there is this contrast between something very crafted and something that seems very artificial which is something that I'm playing with in these new works.

**And finally, what are the biggest challenges facing young artists today in your opinion?**

There are too many of them! I guess it is a question of being able to continue exploring, with so many young artists doing so well at such a young age, it is important to feel able to take risks and find new ways of working.

**Do you feel that pressure to work in a certain way?**

What has been nice about working with Pilar from so early on, is that we built a relationship whilst I was studying. They were very flexible about my work and just let me get on with it, so I'm thankful for that. I've been lucky on that front!