

Vivienne Koorland



Vivienne Koorland's paintings carry real weight – the weight of history, the weight of memory, the weight of geographical dislocation and, not least, the ponderous weight of the artist's own marks. Koorland layers her imagery in thick, muted colours on to patchworks of rough sackcloth and old hardback book covers. Some images are figurative, some are abstract, some take the form of drawn or painted text. References can be snatches of a song or a newspaper story, but whether paintings refer to something personal or universal, they are all united by Koorland's strongly individual visual language.

Koorland is resident in New York but her native South Africa is still a constant presence (she grew up there under apartheid). There are outlines of the continent painted in gold, images of the indigenous Protea plant and the springbok. The artist often repeats themes and for this exhibition, titled 'Condensation: S Is for Say It', the focus is on a recurring set of words that correspond to the letters of the alphabet: A is for Africa and AK-47 ('AK-47/Kalashnikov', 2010, pictured left), I is for Index and iPhone, R is for Remnant and Rothko and so on. Used both as the titles of paintings and as painted texts, these recurring words are transformed into a kind of mantra.

The overall effect is a strong sense of gravity but there is a lightness here



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too, quite literally in a dark, curtained-off room in the downstairs gallery. Pressing a button outside turns the light on inside. Wait a minute for the light to go off, enter the space and the fluorescent paint in the works on the walls makes the text and images hover above their canvases in a soft glowing green. **Helen Sumpter**