

ISAAC ANDREWS

I WISH I'D TAKEN MORE PHOTOGRAPHS



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4 Rue du Prince Albert

1050 Brussels

"Real art has the capacity to make us nervous", the formidable critic Susan Sontag proclaimed in her seminal book *Against Interpretation* (1966)¹. When I read this many years ago, Sontag offered me an alternate form of attention: to let the sensations of colour and depiction move through the body without constraint, to be open to the possibilities of intimacy. In her critique, she saw feeling, affect, the body, the self, desire, love, loneliness as valid sources of artistic pursuit in the viewer.

The nine oil-paintings in Isaac Andrews' exhibition *I Wish I'd Taken More Photographs* invite the viewer to interweave their affective and emotional world with his. Andrews first solo show, it marks a pivotal career milestone, with his biggest painting, *I Wish I'd Taken More Photographs*, on display. Despite these paintings appearing as two-dimensional depictions of semi-fictional worlds, they have real psychic resonance and depth: wallpapers, patterns and fabrics function as domestic and psychological interiors where still shots from cinematic-like scenes unfold. The two-dimensionality is an ode to the paintings' narratology – they are not a direct imitation of reality, and have no light source. Instead, they are vehicles for emotional states – whether desire (*I Wish I'd Taken More Photographs*), loneliness (*What Was Left*), or togetherness (*You Are Love*). For Andrews, painting is not just a window into the world, but also the feelings that construct life. These sentimental paintings, constructed in a palette of orange, teal, burgundy and lime unite as figurative meditations not just about what constitutes personhood: dreams, desires, feelings and connection.

Four of the paintings are of flowers – odes to liminal states of growth, life, wilting and demise. Upon first encounter, the illustrations might not register as flowers; the oxblood burgundy red that fills the canvas dominates the delicate lines. *Dear April*, however, is an intricate meditation on the fallibility of rebirth and the unpredictability of life itself – despite appearing two dimensional and fixed in a frame, they are caught in motion. This sense of movement and time is also reflected in the titles – *Love My Way – Left*, *Love My Way – Middle* and *Love My Way – Right*. Looking at this painting, the tender pinks, hues of white and black wash over me with a sensitivity I hadn't felt in some time, my heart open to the possibilities of painterly gesture as artifice.

In a world of oversaturation, where images curate life in grids on iPhones, and photographs act as punctuation to reality, the subtle sensations which dwell behind the frame are often overlooked. By announcing "I Wish I'd Taken More Photographs", Andrews offers a simple yet profound desire – that life is composed of intimacy and moments of internal and external connection; that in these snapshots, we can ponder what makes us human. The beauty is found in Andrews' ability to not eclipse points of connection, but instead bear witness to them. If, as Sontag notes, interpretation is about being attuned to the feeling's art evokes, we can look at these paintings, and feel. In longing to have "taken more photographs", there are moments, like rumination and psychic resonance, which often go amiss, however fleeting. Andrews prompts us to look again.

- Written by Hatty Nestor

¹ Susan Sontag, "Against Interpretation," in *Against Interpretation and Other Essays* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1966), 8.