

From one to the other — something rises to the surface between them. A question; a matter. They're aware of it and each other. Everything refracts through this matter. It takes on traits of all the things in the room, then projects them out askance. The new arrangement requires an adjusted angle to be seen in the light. It articulates itself differently according to each inside and to those who step out the door onto the street and walk away. It's altered after sleep, where what's dreamed is shaped by the bottled hours of the day, and the hand moves freshly in the morning.

Her eye orients north-east. A whole tree bends with the wind and a line lassoes a piece of paper, pinning her thought. Everything leans the same way. Synchronicity makes movement supple, so their bodies slip through space with ease. A gloved hand, with rehearsed flair, leads toward a horizon line, shot through the window. Twinkling edges of a black-out curtain cut across the field. An egg shines under the covers. Looking is searching-seeing under which hard edges shed their shells, becoming soft, permeable and transparent. It's his turn. He leans into the seam of light, adjusting the order of his face. A fallen eye reads the letter back to front, the lines corresponding as the word misses the tongue.

Like a kit-of-parts, the portmanteau 'parallelotopia' draws on a suite of elements used by Garance Matton and Rob Miles as tools of composition: namely shape (parallelotope), arrangement (parallel) and place (topos). Held together with the prefix 'para' – meaning both 'alongside' and 'to shield against' – the title identifies a shared interest in spatial notions of adjacency, separation and concurrence, and the question of how to visualise them.

Displaying paintings made across a variety of media – including oil on canvas, paper collage, clay relief, wood cut-out and a co-created bi-folding screen – the duo exhibition reveals a multifaceted investigation into figurative image-making and the representation of painted space.

How space can be conjured and composed – in an image (as illusion), on a painting's surface, and as a shaped object itself – is a shared fascination for Matton and Miles. Searching for ways to exceed a single point of view, they play with, merge and break different modes of perspective, resulting in complex configurations that emphasise multidimensional experiences of place. Throughout the works, this line of enquiry coalesces repeatedly in the motif of the parallelogram. Used as a formal, optical and symbolic device to structure the act of looking, it appears variously as a wall, a window, a table, a wedge of light, an image within an image.

As a screen, the parallelogram divides the depicted space, allowing a co-existence of different scenes or moments. Repeated as a grid of diagonal lines, it structures the surface into an angled plane, without recession or horizon, as though seen from a roving, overhead position. Splitting and doubling, folding and tilting this slanting shape offers the artists ways to facilitate movement back and forth between geometry and perspective; surface and depth. To keep the space of the paintings unfixated.

Both artists are pre-occupied with variants of 'in-progress space'. For Matton, this is primarily the studio, which she explores both as a daily setting – where things are continually being created and changed – and as a projection of mental space. Responding to the fluctuating nature of the studio, her paintings search for a way to produce a finished representation of a state of (material and imaginative) unfinishedness. Miles' images evolve from the translation of everyday scenarios and social interactions onto the flat page of the sketchbook. Drawing either directly or recently from life, stylistic and compositional moves are developed as intuitive interpretations of shifting spatial and relational dynamics. From these sketches, Miles develops formal compositions that play with different ways in and out of the painted space, so that it folds and unfolds in response to looking.

There is a welcoming quality shared by the two artist's work; an initial gentleness and everyday familiarity, which opens out into complexity and fragmentation. In different ways, the works are shaped by an attentiveness to the pleasures and challenges of looking and drawing, of putting together and taking apart; and by a concerted effort to invite an active, engaged response on the part of the viewer.