

# The Patience of Ordinary Things

PAINTINGS BY

FANNY RUSH



THE PATIENCE OF ORDINARY THINGS

2013

## The Patience of Ordinary Things

It is a kind of love, is it not?  
How the cup holds the tea,  
How the chair stands sturdy and foursquare,  
How the floor receives the bottoms of shoes  
Or toes. How soles of feet know  
Where they're supposed to be.  
I've been thinking about the patience  
Of ordinary things, how clothes  
Wait respectfully in closets  
And soap dries quietly in the dish,  
And towels drink the wet  
From the skin of the back.  
And the lovely repetition of stairs.  
And what is more generous than a window?

*Pat Schneider*



Window - Summer morning - Dorset. 67 x 67 cm.



Stripy jug - Winter mid-morning - London. 51 x 38 cm.



Busy Lizzy - Summer noon - Dorset. 61 x 54 cm.



Glass - Spring morning - Rome. 49 x 66 cm.





Window - Summer late afternoon - Dorset. 52 x 118 cm.



Tulips - Summer afternoon - London. 55,5 x 38,5 cm.



Coffee pot - Spring afternoon - London. 42 x 33 cm.



Coffee flask - Winter afternoon - Milan. 47 x 70 cm.



Big table - Autumn lunch time - London. 50 x 50 cm.



Jug - Winter morning - Lucca. 46 x 58 cm.





Table and chair - Spring afternoon - London. 32 x 58 cm.



Chair - Winter late morning - Lucca. 48 x 49 cm.



Chair - Autumn lunchtime - London. 69 x 46,5 cm.

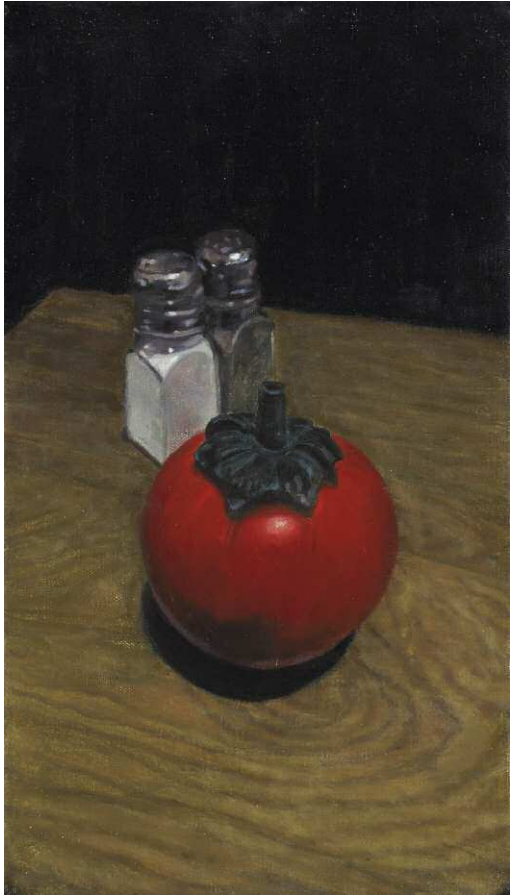


Cup - Spring late afternoon - Hyderabad. 44.5 x 56 cm.



Glasses - Spring early morning - Hyderabad. 46 x 68 cm.





Ketchup - Spring lunchtime - London. 44 x 25 cm.



Mustard - Winter lunchtime - London. 75 x 49.5 cm.





Tomatoes - Summer late afternoon - London. 48 x 74 cm.



Fruit - Summer afternoon - London. 67 x 45,5 cm.



Round table - Summer lunchtime - London. 35 x 45 cm.



Peonies - Spring late morning - Rome. 46 x 49 cm.



Peony heads - Early summer morning - Dorset. 45 x 55 cm.



## A Sense of Tranquility



A sense of tranquility pervades the observer of Fanny Rush's paintings, almost as a painting by Johannes Vermeer (c.1632–1675) lulls the viewer into another world. It is, however, deceptive to believe that she achieves this in a facile manner. Her intuitive choice and organisation of shapes, carefully considered palette and discerning eye which come together to create these thoughtful works stem from her own explorations with the paintbrush and of life.

Her pictures fall within the genre of still life that lifts simple objects to a higher plane. Her inspiration is not drawn from the moralising Dutch *vanitas* paintings of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but is stimulated by artists whose depictions of everyday objects elevate the commonplace into studies of beauty. The simplicity of Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin's (1699–1779) composition of a copper pot, three eggs, handled terracotta pan and wooden pepper pot (Paris, Musée du Louvre) is no different than Rush's ennobling of the humble, plastic, tomato-shaped ketchup dispenser in her *Ketchup - Spring lunchtime - London*. The kitchen utensils may have changed through the centuries, but the exaltation of the ordinary remains the same. The isolation of objects forces the eye to concentrate on form and tonality. Thus the armchair and its shadow in *Chair - Late winter morning - Lucca* is transformed from a painting of a corridor into a study of shape and light. Similarly, the compressing of two piles of books next to a tall glass bottle in *Books - Summer morning - Wiltshire*, focuses on outline and tone much in the same way that Giorgio Morandi (1890–1964) achieved in his many explorations of collections of vases, bowls, and pots where the objects themselves become less important than their forms, colours and relationships to each other.

Often in these paintings of apparently simple items, the evocation of texture gives pleasure to the objects. Francesco de Zurbarán's (1598–1664) brass beaker and three ceramic jugs isolated on a shelf (Madrid, Museo del Prado), like Rush's *Jug – Winter Morning – Lucca*, elevates humble jugs through the masterful rendering of contrasting textures. Just as Zurbarán picked out the shiny glint of the white ewer with a daub of light paint and contrasted it with the matt finish of the terracotta jug to the right, Rush picks out the reflective glaze of her jug with a curved, sweeping stroke and gives it a foil in the dull, matt colour of the terracotta shelf upon which it sits. Closely related to this focus on texture is a heightened appreciation of light and reflection. Rush's gleaming silver teapots or salt and pepper shakers that give subtle reflections of the world around them stem directly from William Nicholson's (1872–1949) studies of pea pods reflected in a silver bowl or necklaces and blue gloves mirrored in a silver jar.

The reflection of one colour on another is also a key element of Rush's paintings. Her colour theory does not stem from study of previous masters, but from her own experimentation into the way colours react. She tells a story of painting a cyclist and his shadow and discovering how the yellow tones of her picture suddenly made more sense when she added a purple glaze. In her recent works, passages such as the contrast of the blue low lights on each of the tomatoes to the vibrant red of the fruit in *Tomatoes – Late summer afternoon – London*, the purple hues of the table and floor of *Mint Tea – Spring morning – London* foiled by the delicate tones of the porcelain cup or the red undertones of the tablecloth paired with the green patterned chair in *Glass – Spring morning – Rome* demonstrate the tonal harmony that Rush achieves by her understanding of the colour spectrum. Unintentionally, but with great delight, she reproduces what an artist like Gustave Caillebotte (1848–1894) discovered when he painted the shadows in *The Bridge at Argenteuil and the Seine* (London, National Gallery) or Lucian Freud (1922–2011) conveyed in the passages of contrasting colour in the fleshy shadows of his nudes.

Rush's eye is not just that of a painter. Her work in photography and film

conditioned her to understand how to capture a scene through a cinematographer's viewfinder. Her compositions often speak of a fleeting image: the way the wind billows the curtains in *Window – Summer morning – Dorset*, the waning sunlight stretching across the sill in *Window – Summer late afternoon – Dorset* or the short time before the ring of water left by an unseen glass in *Mint Tea – Spring morning – London* evaporates. The balance of her compositions is often down to the cropping of the image. Rush frequently paints a larger image, but as she nears completion of the painting, she cuts down the canvas to focus on what may seem an unlikely angle, but one that gives greater pleasure to the eye. Thus the principle subject of *Mint Tea – Spring morning – London* takes up only the lower left half of the picture plane or the 'negative' space of the bare table linen becomes equally important to the coffee set in *Coffee pot – Spring afternoon – London*.

Rush's conscious editing, whether it be of selection of objects, choices of colour and light or composition bring to mind a quote by Juan Gris (1887–1927) 'The essence of painting is the expression of certain relationships between the painter and the outside world, and that a picture is the intimate association of these relationships with the limited surface that contains them.' Fanny Rush is hardly limited by the canvases on which she paints, but she is able to limit her personal viewpoint of the world onto small rectangles of canvas in a manner that clearly delights.

Claire Van Cleave

## Growing up in London

Growing up in London, as the child of two artists I was lucky enough to inherit the gifts of good draftsmanship and a strong visual sense, but in my youth I balked at joining the ‘family trade’. I had a huge amount of energy, a love of travel, and a passion for design and colour so my first profession as a stylist working in fashion photography suited me well – this matured into a career as an art director in film.

It was while working in the film industry in São Paulo, Brazil in the mid 1990’s that I fell in love with painting. There, away from the critical eye of anyone who knew me well, I took up a paintbrush. I knew immediately that this was what I was born to do – so renouncing all previous careers I have been a painter ever since.

At times, when feeling peaceful, I am able to see in ‘flashes’ how everyday things, subject to the way that light falls on them, can be strikingly beautiful. This is what I strive to capture in the paintings.

I am fascinated by the qualities of light, how it falls and its colours, and I have undoubtedly learned as much from Newton as I have from Rembrandt. Over time I have developed a distinct way of working with paint and colour – although the paint mixture used in every stroke will be biased towards a particular hue, it will also include in varying amounts all three of the primary colours – which gives us the whole spectrum in every part of the work. This concept follows the laws of colour and light and represents things in the way that we actually see them, and my approach is not to paint things, but to paint the light that reveals them.

This intense interest in light started for me as a child. Aged about eleven when on a trip to the National Gallery with my father, I was mesmerized by a painting by Joseph Wright of Derby called *An Experiment on a Bird in the*

*Air Pump* – a bird is suffocated in a large glass jar by a scientist surrounded by an enthralled and horrified family. The jar appears to be glowing because the painter has touched the faces and clothing of those closest to it with pale yellow paint. This vivid depiction of the journey and colour of light astounded me, even as I revelled in the grisly sentiment of the work and identified with a saddened, yet still curious little girl among the onlookers.

Nowadays, my mentors are still painters that are governed by light; Rembrandt of course, and also Chardin, William Nicholson, Hammershøi, Degas – and many more, including some less well known such as the Dutch painter, Jan Mankes, who died young in 1920 and Rodrigo Moynihan. Like me, most of these artists have painted portraits and also been drawn to paint ordinary things in beautiful situations.

Although I follow the physical laws of the world in my work in order for it to ‘ring true’, it is not my intention to slavishly follow reality. As I work, I endeavor to let go, paint loosely and allow the painting to dictate its needs to me. Sometimes, in moments when it all goes so right and I can see that I’ve caught the absolute essence of something with just one or two strokes of my brush, I am filled with such a surge joy that I whack up the music and dance around the studio. I feel that the love I have for it and the fun I have doing it is there to be seen in the work.

All works made using oil paint on canvas and were painted in 2012–2013



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Photography Prudence Cumming Associates

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Printing Lecturis bv, Eindhoven

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Amhurst Press / Oxford University Press

ISBN 978 0 907435 20 4