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Standing on the corner: a review of Andy Newman's 'Cambridge Corners'

Visiting Williams Art Gallery earlier this month, **Jon Sanders** reviews Andy Newman's 'Cambridge Corners'.

by **Jon Sanders**

Tuesday 14th May 2013, 09:51 BST

As Andy Newman talked me through the winding philosophy of his new exhibition, "Cambridge Corners", it was as if he was gesturing subtly at its theme. His reasons for painting a series on the urban architecture of Petersfield and Romsey are various – biographical, artistic, pragmatic. That there is no single motive is important. The viewpoint is usually of an individual on the move who has paused briefly to contemplate an interesting door, chimney or pavement. Newman must be one of the only people who has stopped in these long roads of houses for a purpose other than staring into someone's living room.

There are no people in Newman's paintings, nor any signs of human presence. He is primarily interested in shape and colour, displaying both in dazzling combinations. Buildings drawn upwards, doors squashed and windows of moulded disproportion all exist in a world of childish caricature. These are streets in which big friendly giants might stroll at witching hour. Newman's lintels especially seem to have their own humorous personality (one longs to draw smiley faces on them).

Newman's colour, too, inhabits an alternate reality. In particular, the roads in his paintings are unlike any earthly road; they are rather vortexes of spectral awakening, and rivers in which jostling currents are visible. One of his most pleasing motifs is a thin yellow grid, reminiscent of an ordnance survey map, which can be found crossing a roof, separating slabs on pavements, structuring brick walls, and gently connecting all the paintings, otherwise distinct. Overall,

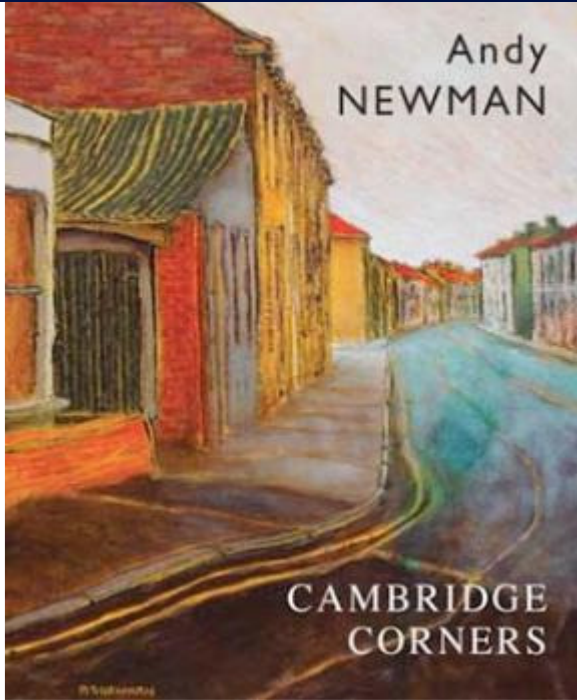
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ANDY NEWMAN / WILLIAMS ART GALLERY

his interests and style are not dissimilar from those of Cézanne, and it's no shock to find that Newman has spent much time painting the south of France.

The appropriateness of the space, Williams Art on Gwydir Street, is another point in the exhibition's favour. Chris Williams, the gallery's director, has commissioned a set of paintings that not only represent the roads around the gallery, but paintings that build their way along the walls of the viewing space. Comparing the paintings, you stand in this corner and glance over to that, or amble round as if inquiring

into people's front rooms. While the title of the exhibition may incorrectly suggest that Newman's paintings are only mimetic, it does ask the question as to how far all urban architecture is like these "Cambridge corners", and on leaving the exhibition you find Newman's "Cambridge corners" just about everywhere.

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