

# Andy Pankhurst

Motif, 1985 - 2005

21 September - 21 October 2005

Monday - Friday 10 - 5.30

Saturday 10 - 1.00

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# Motif

'Progress in art does not come from expanding one's limitations, but in knowing them better'

- *Georges Braque*

Andy Pankhurst is a young painter. In this exhibition, 'Motif', he has put together an exhibition which spans the twenty years of his working life - 1985-2005. In this sense the show is *curated*. I spent a very humid afternoon in June talking to him about his work and ideas and looking at his paintings and drawings; and the set-ups in his Hackney studio within which he had placed the model or had situated an object to be drawn or painted. The title, he explained, came to him as he realised that he had been doing the same thing since he started painting in his teens. By including this span of work he enables us to better see the project he has undertaken. In reviewing his work synoptically, he has come to realise that he has not been concerned with progress - as ordinarily conceived. He notes, with empathy, that Matisse had felt something similar.

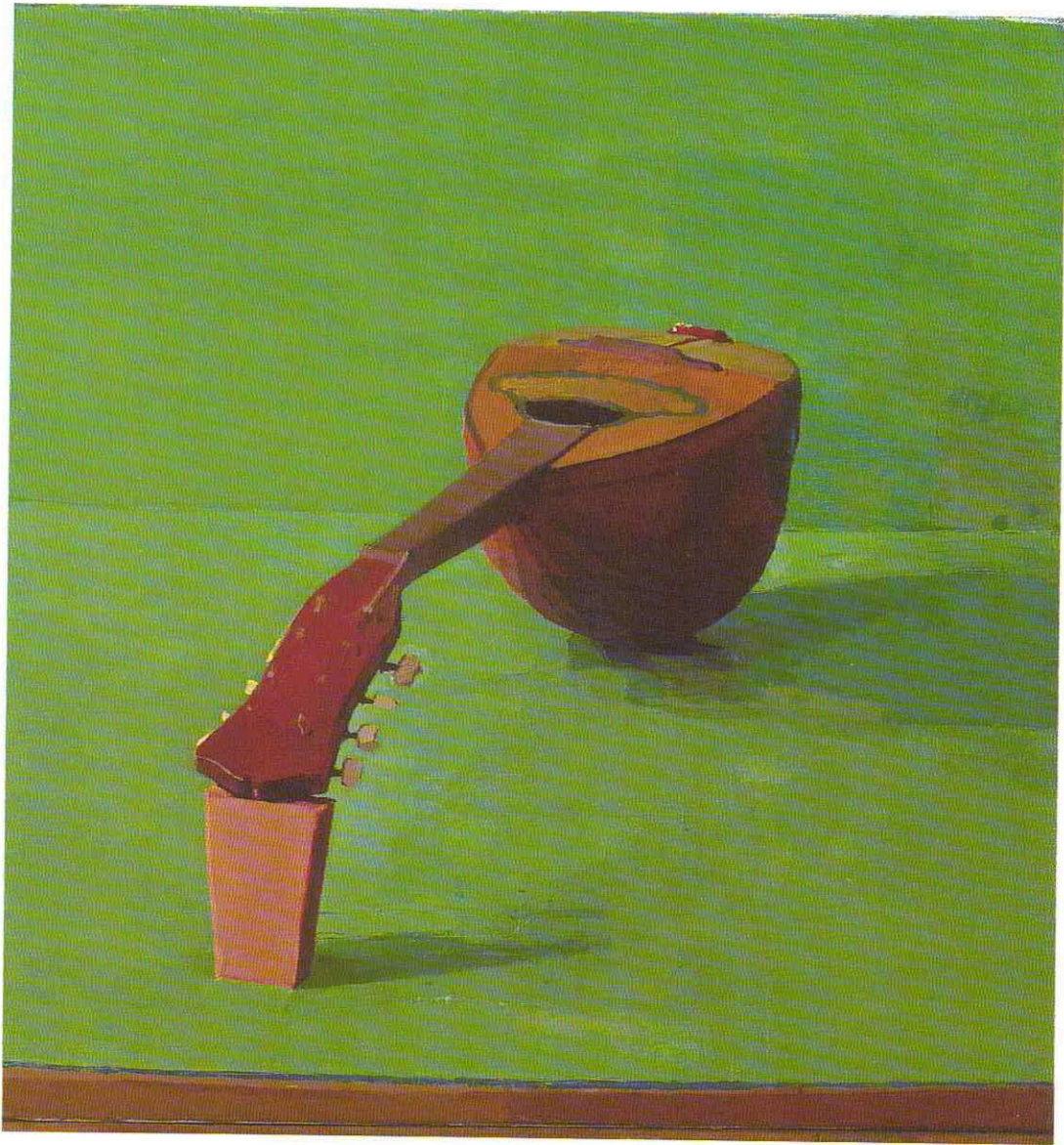
Hanging in the Matisse show at the Royal Academy earlier this year had been the second painting Matisse ever painted. Matisse 'was shocked to see, twenty years later, that the essential character of his work had barely changed. "all that time of intense effort seemed to have brought no smallest jot of progress."'

Andy's work, however, is not reactionary. Whilst he does not believe in the kind of progress sought by an *Avant-Garde*, he nevertheless seeks to clarify the one thing that he does as an artist; to explore the traffic between the three dimensional world as he sees it and the two dimensional surface he constructs in accordance with what he sees. He is an artist working in a tradition, broadly conceived. That tradition provides the territory within which both artist and spectator discern and enjoy the imaginative experience of pictorial content, supported by the perception of a flat designed and worked surface. That the set-ups and point of view render geometrical coherence to the finished surface, is testimony to the way in which painters organise experiences for their viewers. What we see is the surface - present to us. What we imagine, in virtue of seeing that surface, is the model, a landscape or a still life - absent from us.

He is a contemporary painter concerned with the *aesthetic* nature of painting within the broader context of contemporary art. He has *chosen* painting as a medium within which his work as an artist can articulate aesthetic ideals only achievable within the strictures of that activity. The progress these pictures accomplish is in getting clearer about the project as a whole. The question is never 'What shall I do next?' - a question that presses upon those who have abandoned tradition and medium; for they have no established parameters within which to sustain a coherent *oeuvre*. Rather, the question repeats itself anew each work, 'How can I *make* this painting of this subject?' That question makes sense within the development of the artist's work taken as a whole: the project.

It is heartening to look at these beautiful paintings and to realise that, in and through them, Andy Pankhurst contributes to the rejuvenation of a rewarding tradition.





II. Mandolin, 2004-05  
Oil on canvas, 21  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 20  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches