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## Kaye Donachie

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**Maureen Paley**

Bethnal Green to Hackney

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Kaye Donachie's paintings have always contained ambiguities, her depictions of Edenic and utopian scenes often incorporating intimations of dread or exploitation. However, in her current works portraying women from the 1920s and '30s, it's the very forms themselves that seem indeterminate. The figures are blurred or multiplied, bodies and faces continually bisected by lurching shadows, diffused with eerie light, or refracted through prisms of coppery colours so that they seem to be on the verge of dissolving away altogether into the background.

The women reflect Donachie's continuing interest in idealist movements – they're all feminists and futurists, a mixture of persons real and imagined. The mood, however, is far from hopeful; instead, these six small works seem melancholy, brittle. Taken together, they read like still versions of some strange German expressionist film, whose complicated montage effects have somehow been held in stasis, as if slowed by the translation to paint. Donachie's staring heroines seem unnaturally fixed in place, their potential movements at once obscured and occluded.

Such cinematic associations are appropriate. In the upstairs gallery, the artist has compiled a programme of excerpts from various leftfield, experimental films dating from the '30s to the '70s. Although each clip is stylistically distinct, two main thematic areas emerge: the play and manipulation of light and pattern, and issues surrounding the representation of women, as images and objects to be gazed upon. This may sound rather theoretical or dryly academic, but in fact the films are often quirkily amusing and even touching, the show as a whole never heavy-handed – quite the opposite, in fact: the overall sense is of something fugitive and vaporous, a vision of femininity that's mutable and inchoate. *Gabriel Coxhead*



*'I do believe that most of me, floats under water', oil on canvas, 2010*