The work is oriented, shaped and coloured following a certain order: the points of the compass, the cycle of the seasons and the qualities of place. These qualities find affirmation and tension (proving ground) in their relation to Matthew Smith’s paintings. The titles are place names from the four corners of the ‘old world’. They are places that retain a connection to an older way of living and an older way of understanding the objects in their world. The exhibition embodies the way in which such older understandings meet our newer world.

Altai
The North. Tight and attenuated form with wintry colour scheme. Narrow and clenched openings. Reduced ground plan. Altai is a particularly bleak region of Mongolia. It is the only pair not to be supported by the warmth of a painting. Instead its background (to its north) is the street.

Gennesseret
The East. Like spring, a forceful and almost clashing combination. The circumference of the forms opens up. Gennesseret is a region in the Middle East, known as the ‘garden of riches’.

Malabar
The South. Land of depth and generosity of form. Here the jug and vase forms are (like summer) proportionately at their most generous, although their relationship with the grey painting behind lends the overall composition a sombre tone. Malabar is a southerly region of India, the notional heart of Proving Ground.

Taroudannt
The West. The complex combination of blue-green and coffee brown is made particularly rich set against the blue painting behind. A composition combining richness with an almost excessive visual charge. Taroudannt is a fort city at the far west of the Maghreb.

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