

# MESSUMS

YORKSHIRE

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Tom Robinson  
Red Day

**17 September – 17 October**  
The Long Gallery, Messums Wiltshire

*“... these works transmit, again and again, the feeling of a first impression: they vary and shift but reveal no depth; a surface freshness seems to be constantly renewed before our eyes. The paint often seems to be pushing forward and outwards from the centre of the canvas. In some of the pieces this process is strenuous, muscular, more conflicted; [in others] there is a kind of grace to this interplay, with some paint pushing and some paint yielding; paint making way for more paint.”*

Beau Hopkins

Painting in his light-filled studio on the north Norfolk coast Tom Robinson's abstract oils evolve over months to create complex, rhythmic planes of overlapping colour and space. His work sits within a history of British painterly abstraction where the language of the brush

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takes the lead over any personal or formal qualities and the success of Robinson's painting is defined purely by colour, the touch of the paint on canvas, tension and space.

Starting with a one-dimensional idea of colour and form Robinson gradually establishes a structure and colour key, describing his work as 'reaching for something hovering behind the surface: the meta image'. The paint is applied thickly, soaking brushes in pots of paint rather than a palette. Then reworking the paint, scraping it back with chisels or small planes of wood planes.

It can take over a year to finish a painting and Robinson places great importance on time for contemplation. He works surrounded by paintings at various stages of completion. It is an instinctive yet considered way of working. Each painting is balanced and compact, elevating rather than mitigating the tension and visceral energy of his mark-making. His understanding of colour is subtle and often surprising. Colours bounce forwards and sink back, giving them a three-dimensionality akin to relief sculpture.

Robinson first found the Greek and Assyrian reliefs in the British museum as a student in London, igniting an interest that has shaped his understanding of rhythm and surface in painting since. The way objects and forms overlap the next and a perspective always at 90 degrees are important and tangible markers central to his paintings. It is profoundly different to space in linear perspectives in post-renaissance painting.

Robinson is keenly aware of his place in the long history of abstract painting. He names Poussin, Matisse and Kossoff as the most important to his practice, while also citing French Modernism with Cezanne and Soutine, De Kooning and Philip Guston in America, in British painting Auerbach and the Borough Group, and contemporary practitioners notably Albert Oehlen, Oscar Murillo and Cecily Brown. For him great painting is defined by good abstract qualities - the touch of paint on canvas, tension, and space.

Music and words are important too. Robinson is an avid reader of prose and poetry - and the effect on painting is more intangible. Robinson's practice is perhaps best understood in the context of British Abstraction in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, and he builds upon this rich history of abstraction and innovation in light and space. David Bomberg is of particular importance, both his explosion of space and the untamed painterliness of his later work. Messums has a strong tradition of supporting artists working in this discipline and this exhibition welcomes a fresh iteration of abstract painting while celebrating its continuing relevance and renewal.

Tom Robinson grew up in Dorset and trained at The Royal Drawing School in London. He moved from London to Jersey before settling in Norfolk where he now lives and works.

**Please contact [press@messumswiltshire.com](mailto:press@messumswiltshire.com) for further information and images.**

A comprehensive list of past and future exhibitions can be found on our websites.

## **Emerging Talents Programme**

The Emerging Talents programme offers a way into collecting that starts with the work of younger artists whose talent in terms of making and originality in narrative are timeless markers and suggestive of things to come.



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The Emerging Talents programme champions a new generation of artists who exemplify the quality that runs through the more senior programming at Messums. Since opening in 2016 we have introduced an array of burgeoning talent to collectors and seen these artists grow in confidence and recognition.

Following sell-out exhibitions from Francesco Poiana, Hannah Mooney, Jack McGarrity and Tuesday Riddell in the past 10 months, we are delighted to welcome Tom Robinson and Tyga Helme for their first solo shows with the gallery this Autumn. The launch of Messums Photography continues and expands on this ethos of generational support for artists by Messums.

