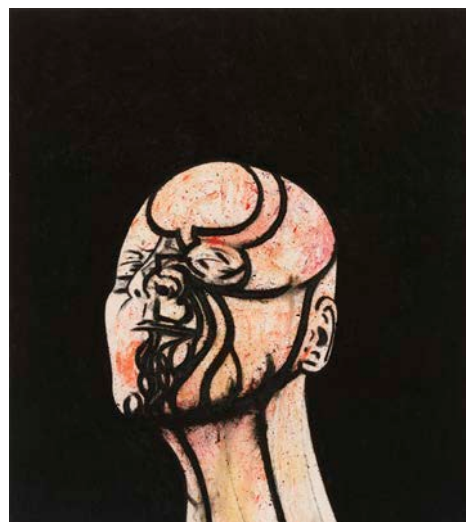


TONY BEVAN

Recent Paintings

2 March – 4 April 2013



Liverpool Street Gallery is pleased to announce Tony Bevan's solo exhibition, *Recent Paintings*, on view from 2 March - 4 April 2013, opening on Thursday 7 March, 6-8pm. Bevan is one of Britain's most distinguished and uncompromising contemporary painters. *Recent Paintings* is Bevan's third solo exhibition at Liverpool Street Gallery, and is held in association with Niagara Galleries, Melbourne, where the exhibition will also be on view from 7 May – 1 June 2013.

For over the past four decades, Bevan's paintings and drawings have extended and expanded the relationship between abstraction and figuration through a concise repertoire of recurring subject matter: portraits of the human head (often the artist's own), architectural interiors, studio objects and furniture, and recently a solitary tree – a new inspiration chanced upon during recent travels to China.

Bevan works in the tradition of the famed School of London creating strong, evocative paintings that have a similar intensity to the work of founding members Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon. He has created a direct relationship or linkage between vastly visually different subjects – architectural spaces, landscapes and the human head – by rendering each in a linear or skeletal form to highlight certain core structures within. Scoured and gouged in charcoal, then painted over in concentrated hues (Bevan often limits his palette to a distinctive range of rich reds and oranges, cobalt blue, vermillion purples and dense blacks) the subjects are reduced to repetitive, linear patterns. The results simultaneously alienate and engage the viewer as they experience a visceral response.

Bevan paints on a monumental scale with an emphasis on materials – he makes his own acrylic paint and pigment and insists on the varying quality of marks generated by charcoal made from different woods. He works initially on the ground, enjoying the interplay of gravity with the resistance of the hard floor beneath to create his vigorous, staccato-like marks. Bevan makes no attempt to conceal the 'fall out' of the creative process and his finished, tactile surfaces remain littered with small splinters of charcoal, studio dust, hand prints, knee prints and other debris, testifying to the artist's complete physical emersion.

The human head, in particular Bevan's own, seen in *Self Portrait PC1218* (2012) (above, right), is his most repeated subject, endlessly rephrased and reinvented. The isolated form, usually rendered boldly, reaches

upward or outward often emerging from within monochromatic background of solid red, orange, blue or black.

Tree PC1211 (2012) (above, left) stems from his extensive travels to China in 2007 and 2008. Visiting the cave paintings of Dunhuang, Gansu Province and the great Buddha at Leshan, it was in the district of Dujiangyun, Sichuan Province that Bevan discovered and found inspiration from an ancient tree in a courtyard temple. **Bevan states: “What attracted me was the tree’s contradictions and the endless forms that came from this – a bit like looking at clouds changing – I set out to explore its full nature and the forms held within.”** By reducing the tree to its elemental structural form, alongside the use of intense flaming red tones and the sheer size of the canvas, Bevan conveys the tree’s noble bearing and life force.

Bevan’s architectural interiors vary from ceiling rafters, towers, skylights and vast corridors to furniture or objects stacked within the confines of his studio. *Recent Paintings* will include a selection of his ‘tabletop’ and ‘tower’ paintings; images created from seemingly random or chaotic assemblages of objects on top of his studio table. The paintings are composed of stark silhouettes of linear objects that appear to hover over a horizon-like space – formations resembling a landscape within the interior of the studio.

Although inspired by a diverse range of historical sources, including Mantegna, Holbein, Gericault, Manet and Bacon, Bevan is well known for his highly distinctive, wholly original style. He pushes the boundaries between drawing and painting and between representation and abstraction in ways which imbue his concise subject matter with meaning and possibility. Tony Bevan lives and works in London.

QUOTE SELECTION

“Bevan’s paintings are allusive – unnervingly combining the figurative and the symbolic – and the self-portraits perhaps offer the viewer a greater sense of the artist’s thinking than his appearance.”

Sandy Nairne, *Tony Bevan – Self-Portraits*, National Portrait Gallery, London, 2011, p. 5.

“Bevan has described his practice of working in ‘cycles’. This suggests not only his creation of groups of related work, but also the way that the progress of his work is not strictly sequential.”

Paul Moorhouse, ‘His Finite Body: Tony Bevan’s Self Portraits’, *Tony Bevan – Self-Portraits*, National Portrait Gallery, London, 2011, p. 20.

“When I was travelling in China recently, I went to see a very large Buddha, and I had to climb a hill to get there, and when I got to the top I saw this other hill which eventually turned out to be the back of this enormous Buddha’s head. And that interested me and amused me – to think of heads in terms of hills and vice-versa, and thinking of heads in terms of pure mass.”

Tony Bevan, *Tony Bevan New Paintings*, Ben Brown Fine Art, London, 2008, p. 37.

“Kneeling with his whole weight on the painting, he can be said literally to project himself into the work, grinding the marks into the fabric of the canvas in a way that would not be possible if he were applying the charcoal or paint into a stretched canvas hung on the wall.”

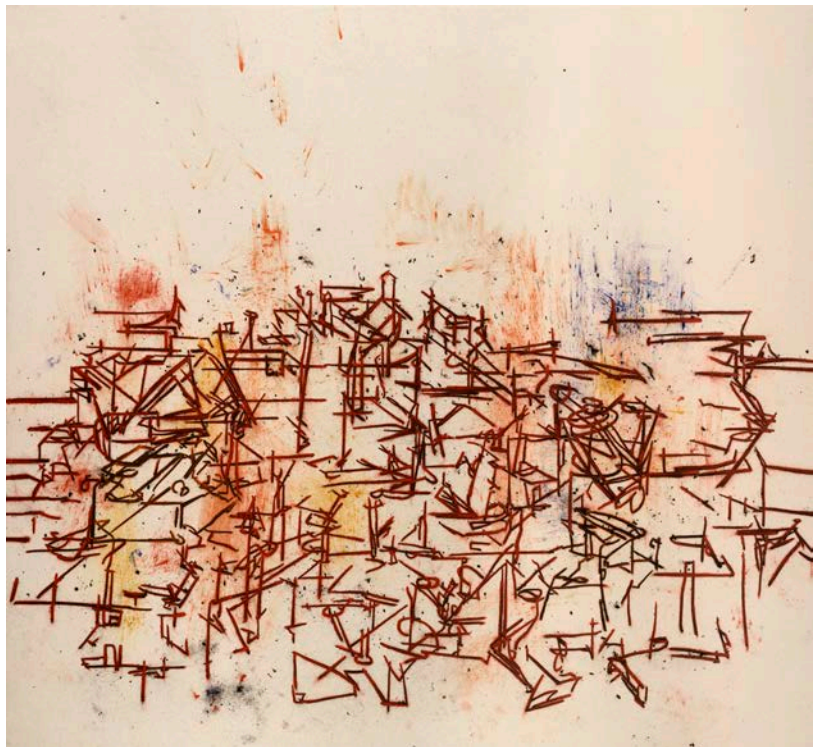
Marco Livingstone, *Tony Bevan*, LA Louver, Venice, 1998, p. 7.

BIOGRAPHY

Tony Bevan was born in Bradford, England in 1951. Between 1964 and 1971, Bevan studied painting and sculpture at Bradford School of Art, continuing his studies at Goldsmiths’ College, London from 1971-1974 and completing further studies at The Slade School of Fine Art from 1974-1976. He has held numerous solo and group exhibitions internationally including, *Tony Bevan Paintings of the 80s and 90s* at Brandenburgische Kunstmuseen Cottbus, Germany in 1997; *Tony Bevan Paintings 1982-2007*, Centre d’Art Contemporaine, Perpignan, France in 2007; *Tony Bevan at LA Louver Gallery*, Los Angeles, USA in 2007; *Tony Bevan: Self Portraits*, at the National Portrait Gallery, London in 2011.

A major retrospective of Bevan's work was presented by the Institut Valencia d'Art Modern (IVAM) in Valencia, Spain in 2005. In 2012, Bevan's work was included in the exhibition *Messerschmidt and Modernity* at The Getty Museum, Los Angeles, alongside Bruce Nauman and Cindy Sherman among others; reflecting the impact today of the aesthetic ideals established during the 18th Century European Enlightenment. Bevan has also held solo exhibitions in the United Kingdom, America, France, Spain, Australia, Israel, Germany and Poland.

In 2007, Tony Bevan was elected as a Royal Academician of the Royal Academy of Arts in London. His work is represented in many prominent international public institutions including Tate Gallery, London; British Museum, London; Yale University Art Gallery, Connecticut; the Israel Museum, Jerusalem; Institut Valencia d'Art Modern, Valencia; Louisiana Museum, Humlebaek and Modern Art Museum, Stockholm. Bevan has also held three successful exhibitions in Australia, two at Liverpool Street Gallery in 2004 and 2006, and one at Niagara Galleries in 2004. Bevan is represented by L.A. Louver, Los Angeles, Ben Brown Fine Arts, London and Liverpool Street Gallery, Sydney.



Images: Tony Bevan, *Tree PC1211*, 2012, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 167.6 x 257.1 cm, *Self Portrait PC1218*, 2012, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 90.8 x 81.2 cm, *Studio Tower PC0713*, 2007, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 365.8 x 249.9 cm, *Table Top PC095*, 2012, acrylic and charcoal on canvas, 142.3 x 154.9 cm. Photography: John Riddy. Images courtesy of Liverpool Street Gallery, Sydney.

For further information about the artist and exhibition, please contact Liverpool Street Gallery on 02 8353 7799 or info@liverpoolstgallery.com.au.