

Gary Hume at IMMA

The first exhibition in Ireland by Gary Hume, one of the most sought-after and inventive painters working in Britain today, opens to the public at the Irish Museum of Modern Art on Thursday 3 April 2003. Entitled simply Gary Hume, the exhibition comprises some 30 works and presents a comprehensive overview of the main developments in Hume's engaging but powerful oeuvre over the past ten years. In addition, to the paintings in the gallery spaces, a sculpture of a giant bronze snowman is being placed in IMMA's 17th-century formal gardens. The exhibition is presented in association with THE IRISH TIMES.

Hume's work is characterised by a distinctive visual vocabulary, combining a bright, colourful palette with severely simplified, childlike forms. He has returned continually to particular subjects including the portrait, the nude and the garden and to images from childhood, such as rabbits, snowmen and polar bears. This seeming innocence can, however, mask a hidden ambiguity or menace. In *Puppy Dog*, 1994, for example, the tranquillity of the child's bedroom is threatened by the advent of a masked intruder, while in *Polar Bear*, 1994, an apparently innocuous green toy spreads out across the surface in a strangely predatory, unsettling way.

Described by art critic Richard Cork as "one of the most adroit, inspiring and resourceful painters around", Hume first came to public attention as a result of his participation in the seminal Freeze show in 1988, which featured artists such as Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin who, like Hume, were soon to acquire celebrity status as yBas (young British artists). His work at this time centred on minimal, high-gloss paintings based on anonymous, hospital swing doors. By 1993 these had given way to more fluid, lyrical style, which, while retaining the same surface quality and economic language, incorporated more figurative elements, including portraits from popular culture such as Patsy Kensit, Kate Moss and, more recently, Michael Jackson, all of which are included in the exhibition.

Hume's new paintings, such as *Three Shades of Grey*, 2002, and *Green Hat*, 2002, are intriguing as they are generally more muted and darker in form and content than before - slightly melancholic and, sometimes, sinister. However, in contrast, *Welcome*, 2002, is particularly cheerful, with echoes of the earlier door paintings, while *Yellow Window*, 2002 marks a return to Hume's grid-like hospital doors and is perhaps a tongue in cheek homage to Duchamp's *Fresh Widow*.

Born in Kent, England, in 1962, Gary Hume graduated from Goldsmiths College in 1988, one of a generation of artists who have become internationally known as yBas (young British artists). He has exhibited extensively internationally. In 1996 he was the British representative at the São Paulo Biennial and in the same year was nominated for the Turner Prize. In 1999 he represented Britain with a large solo show at the XLVIII Venice Biennale. He has also had solo exhibitions at the Bonnefantenmuseum, Maastricht, the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh, the Whitechapel Gallery, London, and Fundació "la Caixa", Barcelona.

On Thursday 3 April at 11.30am independent art critic Sacha Craddock, will present a lecture in response to Gary Hume's painting, Imagery in Painting Today.

On Friday 11 April Rachael Thomas, Curator: Exhibitions at IMMA, will give a guided introductory tour of the exhibition.

Gary Hume continues until 22 June 2003.

Admission is free.

A publication with an essay by Jonathan Jones, who is an art critic and also writes for The Guardian, accompanies the exhibition (price €15.00).

Opening hours:

Tue - Sat 10.00am - 5.30pm

Sun & Bank Holidays 12 noon - 5.30pm

Mondays & 18 April Closed

For further information and colour and black and white images please contact Monica Cullinane at
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