

DAVID HEPHER

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*LACE, CONCRETE AND GLASS,
AN ELEGY FOR THE AYLESBURY ESTATE*

20 JANUARY - 25 FEBRUARY 2012
PRIVATE VIEW THURSDAY 19 JANUARY 6 - 8PM



Winter Reise 2011 Oil on canvas 228 x 273 cm / 90 x 107 1/2 in

I always thought that fact is stranger than fiction. What you see or what you find or what you discover is always more interesting than what you invent

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Extracts from David Hepher - sim+cro © MMXI
Recorded by David Prinold at Little Dubbers
Produced by Alisdair Simpson and Malcolm Crowe

This January, David Hepher will be exhibiting a new series of work based around the infamous Aylesbury estate, Walworth, South East London. These large format paintings depict the immense scale of the tower blocks and include a panoramic piece made up of five large canvases which amount to ten meters in length.

The literalism of David Hepher's work conveys the very substance of the estate, blending building sand with oil paint to create a medium comparative to concrete and/or enlarged photographic images, allowing him to confront his subject directly. By incorporating the fabric of architecture into his paintings, he seeks not merely to represent the tower blocks, but to take over their very substance.

These works speak in a heterogeneous visual language, the Mondrianesque grids of the buildings are interrupted by segments of landscape torn from other urban areas; streaks of paint mark their architectural anatomies; spray paint mimicking tags of graffiti litter the canvas.

Painting on a foreign surface like the concrete liberated me to a certain extent in terms of what I would allow myself to do and not do, and certainly using graffiti did that.

David Hepher 2011

Transcript from film produced by SIM + CRO

Construction of the estate commenced in 1963 and the area now spans over 285,000 square meters - designed to house approximately 10,000 individuals it is one of the largest housing estates in Europe. In a dramatic move the London Borough of Southwark ordered the demolition of the estate with a plan to replace the current tower blocks with 'modern housing' in 2005. Despite this recent upheaval Hepher insists he is not interested in the political or social connotations of his chosen subject.

I have always painted houses, or housescapes. A house, or more symbolically a home, is one of the earliest images a child paints. All the owner's personality is revealed in his home. This is why I only paint residential flats - they have a soul that glamorous office architecture doesn't have. In spite of their beauty I don't want to paint the sleek and shiny city blocks. I like best to work from council blocks, preferably stained and eroded by the dirt and the weather, where the facial appearance is continually changed by the people who live there, their comings and goings, and the changing decor.

David Hepher

The Tate Gallery 1978-80: Illustrated Catalogue of Acquisitions, London 1981

Nor does he conform to what some insist is Le Corbusier's vision skewed; resulting in a vast array of unsightly scars on our urban landscape.

A lot of eyebrows have been raised in terms of why I do them, what's the point of doing ugly things, why I paint ugly things, things with a bad reputation and all that stuff but I see them as quite impressive things. Ugly or beautiful doesn't really come into it. I just think it's an impressive part of the landscape.

David Hepher 2011

Transcript from film produced by SIM + CRO

Born in Surrey, David Hepher studied at Camberwell School of Art and then the Slade School of Art. Prior to the tower blocks his subject was suburban house fronts. Between 1969 and 1974 he painted the Edwardian semi-detached houses of Townley Road, East Dulwich, in such painstaking detail he was labelled as a 'hyper-realist'. Far from 'hyper-realist', this study in the British Council Collection, with the house reduced to graffiti, serves to bring a chunk of the city into a very different context.

David Hepher had solo exhibitions at Whitechapel, Serpentine and Hayward Gallery in consecutive years during the 1970's and is featured in national collections including Tate, Victoria and Albert Museum, Arts Council England and the Contemporary Arts Society. David Hepher's work is to be included in *Out of Britain*, National Museum in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia and was recently shown at the Whitechapel Gallery, East London as part of a series of British Council Collection exhibitions to celebrate their 75th Anniversary.

