

PETER HOWSON

DEMOKRATIA

17 APRIL - 16 MAY 2015

PRIVATE VIEW
THURSDAY 16 APRIL 6 - 8PM

82 Kingsland Road
London E2 8DP

T: +44 (0)20 7920 7777
F: +44 (0)20 7920 7770

info@flowersgallery.com
www.flowersgallery.com



Meshuggah, 2015

Flowers Gallery is pleased to present an exhibition of new paintings by the Scottish artist Peter Howson. Taking place in the lead-up to the UK General Election, the exhibition is a reflection on the political and social issues of our time. In his latest series, Howson represents a nightmarish vision of a new civilization, emerging from global crisis.

As a focal figure of the New Glasgow Boys, and one of his generation's leading figurative painters, Howson has derived inspiration from his personal experiences – from the inner-city streets of Glasgow, to time spent in combat zones as a former official British war artist (Bosnia, 1993). His paintings have tackled the horrors of modern day atrocities and the depths of the human psyche, with an unflinching gaze.

The show's title is taken from an Ancient Greek political reform system, introduced in 507 BC. Loosely translated, *Demokratia* means 'rule by the people'. Epic in scale and intensity, the paintings are crowded with a large cast of barbarous characters. Portraying a breakdown of social order in which a violent underclass fights to gain control, Howson makes reference to the Morlocks of H.G. Wells' *The Time Machine*, a savage post-human species, who feast upon the passive and blindly compliant Eloi people. Reacting to the rise of extreme political factions developing across the world, Howson describes his characters as being "abandoned" by society, using violence as an antidote to boredom and hardship.

Howson's grotesque treatment of the human form pays homage to Bosch and Brueghel. His stark portrayal of human emotions also draws upon the twentieth century influence of the German Expressionists, particularly the works of Otto Dix and Max Beckmann.

As in much of Howson's work, intimate details of internal and familial struggles punctuate the narrative. His daughter Lucie is often represented within his paintings. Within this exhibition she is depicted thrusting a stake into the leg of a primitive, muscular 'Colossus' (a recurring motif and Howson's alter-ego). The Colossus is supported by a baton entwined with a snake, a reference to an instrument of healing in the Old Testament - however here it could also be viewed as a weapon. Her actions are central to Howson's contemporary parable, which questions the dual nature of redemption and destruction.

ABOUT PETER HOWSON

Howson was born in London in 1958. He studied at Glasgow School of Art from 1975 - 1977, and returned in 1979 to complete a Masters degree. In 1985 he was made the Artist in Residence at the University of St Andrews and also a part-time tutor at Glasgow School of Art. In 1992 he was commissioned by the Imperial War Museum to record the conflict in the former Yugoslavia, and was appointed official British war artist for Bosnia in 1993. In 1996 he was awarded Doctor of Letters Honoris Causa, University of Strathclyde. Howson has exhibited extensively in the United States and Europe.

His work is represented in public collections including the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Museum of Modern Art, New York; the Tate Gallery, London; the Victoria & Albert Museum, London; the British Museum, London; Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow; and the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh.

NOTES TO EDITORS

This exhibition will include an exclusive insight into Peter Howson's painting process. Award-winning Director Charlie Paul has installed cameras in Peter's studio which are capturing his every brush stroke, from blank canvas to finished painting, as he creates this series for the exhibition. The result will be screened at Flowers Gallery during the exhibition. Director - Charlie Paul, www.charliepaul.co.uk; Producer - Lucy Paul, Itch Film.

For further information and images please contact Hannah Hughes - Hannah@flowersgallery.com / 0207 920 7777
Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 6pm

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Peter Howson in the studio, Photograph by Charlie Paul, 2015.