

DAVID HEPHER

THE ELEGY OF ROBIN HOOD GARDENS

21 CORK STREET
LONDON W1S 3LZ

15 October 2025 – 15 November 2025

Private View: Tuesday 14 October, 6 - 8pm

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Flowers Gallery is delighted to announce *The Elegy of Robin Hood Gardens*, a solo exhibition by acclaimed British artist David Hepher (b. 1935). Now in his 91st year, with much of his practice dedicated to a sustained examination of London's tower blocks, Brutalist architecture, and urban housing estates, within this exhibition Hepher surveys the Robin Hood Gardens in Poplar, East London. On his renowned large scale and often working on concrete-primed surfaces layered with graffiti motifs, splatters of paint, and pictographic symbols and imagery, Hepher reflects on the legacy of this landmark estate.

Designed by Alison and Peter Smithson and completed in 1972, Robin Hood Gardens stood as a bold experiment in social housing. Since 2017, the estate has been largely demolished, making way for commercial redevelopment and high-density private housing — a fate shared by many Brutalist projects across London. A significant example of Brutalist architecture, the Victoria & Albert Museum acquired a three-storey section including exterior façades and interiors of the Gardens in 2017, which is currently on display at the V&A East Storehouse, London.



David Hepher, *North Face*, 2024, Acrylic, spray paint and concrete on canvas, 226 x 226 cm

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Drawn to the formal beauty of their grid-like structures as well as the physical and emotional residues left by their inhabitants, Hepher began painting the Gardens in 2022, from his photographs taken a decade before. Enlarging the photographs and printing them on the canvas, Hepher begins by layering the canvas with concrete structural elements, replicating a builder's application of material. Within the works, details such as graffiti tags, a childlike drawing of a red house emitting smoke, and orange arrows flying across the painting provide intimate symbolic counterpoints to the monumental façades, grounding the iconic buildings in the lived experience of their residents, as Hepher reflects on how the structures continue to shape memory and community.

The looming scale of the works, including *The Little John Facade*, 2024, at over two metres square, underscores both the alienation and social inequalities these buildings have come to represent as Hepher negotiates a space between memorial and critical acknowledgement of systemic and architectural failure.



David Hephher, *Embryo I*, 2021, Acrylic and concrete on canvas, 250 x 175 cm

The smaller work, *Maid Marion*, 2024, features a cropped view of the building, which includes black graphic arrows, referencing Robin Hood's iconic weapon of the long bow, symbolising his legendary outlaw status and heroic prowess.

Counterpointed within the exhibition is *Embryo I*, 2021, depicting the development of high-rise architecture in Vauxhall, southeast London. While Robin Hood Gardens is much demolished, Vauxhall's towers continue to grow, together embodying birth and death in London's evolving architectural and social landscape.

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 changing décor. David Hephher

ABOUT DAVID HEPHER (b. 1935)

Born in Surrey, Hephher studied at Camberwell School of Art and the Slade. He was a senior lecturer in painting at Chelsea School of Art from 1981 - 1990 and subsequently became Professor and Head of Undergraduate Painting at the Slade. His work is in public collections including Tate, the Museum of London, the Arts Council, British Council, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen, Rotterdam, and the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Exhibition Opening Hours: Monday - Saturday, 11am – 6pm

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PRESS ENQUIRIES: For more information and images please contact Emily Flowers:
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David Hephher, *Small Maid Marion*, 2025, Acrylic, spray paint and concrete on canvas 43.5 x 54 cm

North Face, 2024, marks a distinct analogy between the natural and built environment. Introduced by Hephher on the façade of the building is an image of the Matterhorn, comparing the monumental scale of the urban landscape of London to the Swiss Alps.

The titles and content of the Robin Hood Gardens paintings also relate the residential estate to the English folklore tale of Robin Hood. Hephher inscribes *Robin Hood*, 2025, with written tags of 'Maid Marion' and 'Friar Tuck', members of Robin Hood's band of Merry Men, who stole from the rich to give to the poor, framing the Gardens as a critical allegory for the welfare state and the redistribution of wealth.