

KEN CURRIE RED GROUND

22 February - 27 April, 2019

Private View Thursday 21 February, 6-8PM

Press Preview: Thursday 21 February, 9am-12pm
RSVP to hannah@flowersgallery.com

82 Kingsland Road
London E2 8DP

T: +44 (0)20 7920 7777

press@flowersgallery.com
www.flowersgallery.com

Scottish artist Ken Currie is renowned for his unsettling portrayal of the human figure. Depicting the damage inflicted by war and conflict, illness and decay, Currie provides a response to brutality and suffering in contemporary society. Rising to attention within a generation of painters known as The New Glasgow Boys in the 1980s, Currie is well known for his public murals commissioned for the People's Palace in Glasgow, as well as his enduringly popular artwork from the Scottish National Portrait Gallery Collection *Three Oncologists*, representing a life-long study of the fragility of the human condition.

In this solo exhibition of new works, Currie's rich, luminous paintings depict mysterious rites, rituals, and quasi-medical practices, offering a meditation on violence in its many guises.

The monumental triptych *Down in the Woods* portrays a Kafkaesque world, incorporating the horrifying vision of a monstrous stag beetle amid scenes of beating and self-flagellation. Theatrical painted backdrops provide shallow spaces for the action to unfold, merging from one to another in the manner of a cinematic dissolve. Stage-like backdrops also lend ambiguous, dreamlike qualities to images of shrouded figures in paintings such as *Red Ground*, and the portrait of a nurse wearing sinister-looking red gloves in *Gown*.

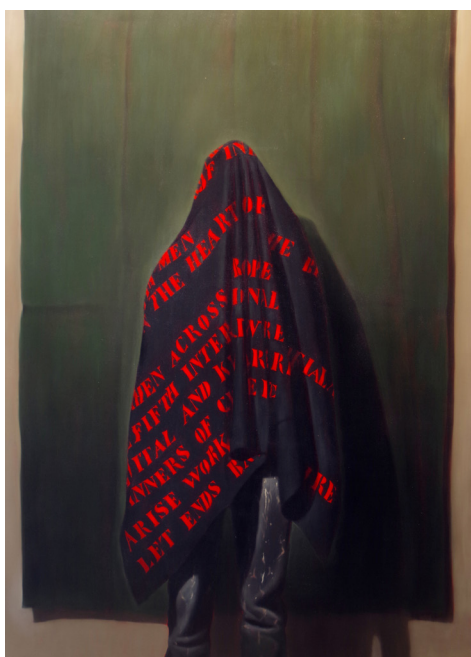


Gown, 2018, oil on canvas, 153 x 214 cm

Further paintings show imaginative depictions of hunted marine life. Ghostly carcasses in paintings such as *Black Backed Gull*, and *Basking Shark* are permeated by a sense of underlying threat, also common to many other works in the exhibition. While the gull's splayed body recalls the archetypal image of the crucifixion, the coiling entrails of the shark relate to the tortuous ancient tradition of disembowelment, recorded for example in accounts of the martyrdom of Saint Elmo c. 303 AD.

Amongst the subjects in the exhibition are traditions that have survived for generations in remote areas of Scotland. *Bird People (After JM)* portrays the controversial customary harvesting of gannet chicks by the Guga Hunters on the Hebridean island of Sula Sgeir. In this brutal image, several of the hunters appear to wear surgical facial masks (a reminder of Currie's earlier works incorporating references to Henry Tonk's images of wounded World War I soldiers). In the side panels of this triptych, female figures extend a pristine white bowl and shroud-like white linen, offering a disquieting acceptance of the cycle of life and death.

For high res images please contact Hannah Hughes: 0207 920 7777 / hannah@flowersgallery.com



Down in the Woods, 2018, oil on canvas, 214 x 611.5 cm; *Red Ground*, 2018, oil on canvas, 214 x 153 cm; *Black Backed Gull*, 2018, oil on canvas, 305 x 213.5 cm.

ABOUT KEN CURRIE

Ken Currie was born in 1960, and studied at the Glasgow School of Art from 1978 - 1983. He was known as one of the New Glasgow Boys along with Peter Howson, Adrian Wisniewski and the late Steven Campbell who studied together at the Glasgow School of Art. Currie has exhibited widely internationally, including a recent solo exhibition at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery; and has been selected for numerous group shows including *The Scottish Endarkenment: Art and Unreason, 1945 to Present* at Dovecot Gallery, Edinburgh, 2016; *Reality, Modern & Contemporary British Painting* at The Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich and Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; and *Drawing Breath*, a touring exhibition marking ten years of the Jerwood Drawing Prize. His work is in the collections of Yale Centre for British Art, Connecticut; Tate, London; Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh; New York Public Library; Imperial War Museum, London; Gulbenkian Foundation, Lisbon; Campbelltown City Bicentennial Art Gallery, Australia; British Council, London; Boston Museum of Fine Art; and ARKEN, Museum of Modern Art, Copenhagen.

NOTES TO EDITORS

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Exhibition opening hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 6pm.