

KEN CURRIE
BLACK BOAT

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16 September - 5 November, 2022

Private View Thursday 15 September, 6-8 PM

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Press Preview: Wednesday 14 September, 9 AM-12 PM

RSVP: press@flowersgallery.com



Black Boat, (triptych), 2020,
 oil on canvas, 214 x 642 cm

Flowers Gallery is delighted to present an exhibition of paintings by Scottish artist Ken Currie, featuring a new body of work connecting stories through the sea. In these paintings, narratives from Ancient Greece interlock with contemporary seafaring tales from the Outer Hebrides, while their vast horizons stretch to traverse the passages in between.

Large-scale paintings such as *The Argonauts* depict ideas of conquest, featuring scenes of brutality and a sky dramatically lit by the trails of falling missiles. Widening out across all three panels of the triptych, the painting resembles a stage set, in which each group of characters engage in symbolic actions with references to both the Argonautic voyage and the Oresteia. The narrative, however, is disrupted by shifts in the alignment of the scene where the panels meet, splicing apart the continuity of time and space as though referring to a cinematic jump cut. These glitches point us towards the dreamlike qualities of Currie's paintings, in which the ambiguity of their storytelling leaves room for the viewer to read their own interpretation of the opposing acts of creation and destruction.

The painting *Black Boat* refers to the poem by Scottish Gaelic poet Sorley MacLean of the same name. In this triptych, the middle panel depicts a scene of distress, in which a crew of modern-day fishermen suffer alongside their haul on rough waters. The flanking panels portray solemn shrouded female figures, recalling the Fates (from Greek mythology), who appear to signal the loss of life on the sea. The curve of the hull of the boat here is repeated in all three panels of the triptych, creating a rolling waveform that amplifies a sense of nausea; meanwhile, the rhythm of the painting is firmly anchored by the jagged path of fishing lines, their structural vectors suggesting a constellation by which to navigate.

The works in *Black Boat* appear themselves to have been subjected to the ravages of the coastal Hebridean environment through the intricate and highly controlled manipulation of their painterly surfaces. A bloom often emerges as though the paintings have been patinated by the elements or illuminated by the spectral glow of phosphorescence. The resulting sensation of the passage of time echoes the hardships of a landscape Currie describes as "steeped in tragedy." He says, "This contrast between beauty and tragedy is there all the time."

For more information and images please contact press@flowersgallery.com / 020 7920 7777



Storm Petrel, 2022,
oil on canvas, 215 x 337 cm

ABOUT KEN CURRIE

Ken Currie was born in 1960, and studied at the Glasgow School of Art from 1978 - 1983. He rose to attention 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 is renowned for his unsettling portrayal of the human figure, often created as a response to brutality and suffering in contemporary society. He 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. His large-scale portrait of preeminent forensic anthropologist Professor Dame Sue Black went on view at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery in May 2021. Currie has exhibited widely internationally, including a 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 11am - 6pm.