

Althuis Hofland Fine Arts

I went to Atlantis

David Brian Smith

Althuis Hofland Fine Arts is delighted to present 'I went to Atlantis.', the first solo exhibition by the British artist, David Brian Smith, after having presented his work at several occasions in group exhibitions at the gallery and art fairs.

The artist has created an array of intensely worked, meticulously rendered paintings that combine brilliant, jewel-like colours with intricate webs of pattern and form.

Besides the brilliant use of colour and wonderfully joyful patterns that infuse each of Smith's paintings, it is impossible to talk about them without discussing their materiality, the history of the artist's deliberately specific choices, and his highly individual techniques. All of the paintings in the exhibition are made on a linen tweed with a herringbone weave. Smith has been painting on this material for over ten years. Originally he liked its connection to rural England and to tweed flat caps which are synonymous with farming and rural life, but he also admires what he calls the 'wonderful qualities of this stable cloth' and it has become his 'go to' for his larger paintings.

Smith grew up on a sheep farm in Shropshire. He first became known for his paintings of sheep and shepherds in idyllic, Arcadian landscapes. The work has since evolved to focus on the landscapes themselves which reflect Smith's deep love for nature. He shares this in common with the 19 Century British painter, Samuel Palmer, who was not only adept at conveying the English countryside but also intent on revealing its hidden, magical qualities. Although Smith grew up on a farm, he credits his tutor, Peter Bishop - who taught him at the beginning of his art education, in Shrewsbury - with encouraging him to make nature the inspiration for his practice. Bishop would regularly take his students to Pistyll Rhaeadr waterfall in nearby Wales. This stunning natural phenomenon made a big impact on the young Smith, as did Bishop's recommendation to look at the work of David Salle. The American artist's paintings have been described as 'kaleidoscopic' and the artist himself talks about how art can function as an accidental trigger - a gateway for the unexpected or the irrational. This idea of using art to open a door into a different realm or even dimension is something that clearly resonates with Smith. He talks of the impact a 'magnificent' installation of colour by the German artist, Katharina Grosse had on him after visiting the Ikon gallery in Birmingham in 2020, and how this has remained in his mind and been a source of inspiration even for this current series of works.

While colour and the natural world are two of the most important aspects of Smith's paintings, we also need to understand the importance the artist attaches to mark-making. He describes his brush work in terms we would more readily associate with textiles. Smith 'stitches' as opposed to strokes his canvases. Perhaps also playing on the idea of the woven substance on which he works, Smith acknowledges his interest in traditional craft techniques, such as weaving, but also uses his unique process to create light-filled, densely packed surfaces brimming with details. These works sometimes shine all the more because the painter incorporates other materials such as gold leaf onto his grounds in order to better reflect the light.

*Edited text by Jane Neal written for David's solo exhibition at galerie ISA

Born in 1981 in Wolverhampton (England), David Brian Smith currently lives and works in London. He studied at Wolverhampton University and Chelsea College of Art and Design, London (UK). Recently his work was shown at Galerie ISA, Mumbai (2024), In 'New Positions In British Painting', Telegraph Foundation, Olomouc, with Tom Anholt, , Jessie Makinson, Justin Mortimer and Caroline Walker (2023). Other solo exhibitions include Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate, Xippas, Geneva and Baronian Xippas, Brussels/ Knokke. David Brian Smith received the Creekside Open Award in 2013 and the Royal Academy Landscape Painting Award in 2005.