

DAVID HEPHER CONCRETE ELEGY

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Opening Reception Thursday October 20, 6 - 8pm

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"I was drawn to painting tower blocks not because I had any personal message to say, but because I felt that it was a striking element of the landscape. It's like Constable had the Stour Valley and Turner had the Medway, and I have Camberwell. This is what landscape painters do – they keep going back to familiar subjects and views and finding new inspiration in them. Cézanne used to say that he could always paint the Mont Saint Victoire. By moving his feet a few inches, he would find a new view. By changing his position, only slightly, he would find another painting." - David Hepher



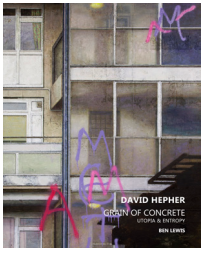
Art 4 All (Triptych), 2016, Concrete, acrylic, oil & spray paint on canvas, 215 x 755 cm

Flowers Gallery is pleased to announce an exhibition of paintings by British artist David Hepher, the artist's first solo presentation in the United States. For forty years British artist David Hepher has focused his singular vision on the domestic high-rises of South London, through which he has channelled the diverse currents that have swept the international world of contemporary art. Finding his subject in the expansive social housing estates built throughout the 1960s and 70s, Hepher has captured the formal beauty of their grid-like structures as well as the physical and emotional traces of their inhabitants.

The paintings in the present exhibition span the past two decades. In paintings of the 2000's such as *Winterreise*, the austere realist style of Hepher's early work was replaced by an increased engagement with the physical nature of the subject matter, and appropriation of architectural elements such as concrete and spray paint within his mixed media paintings. Works such as *Durrington Towers II* have been prepared with a brutal shuttered concrete ground, which replicates the builder's application of textured facades, and pushes the paintings to the brink of abstraction. The surface is overlaid with the spraycan scrawls and slogans of found graffiti, alongside Hepher's own marks and art historical motifs, softening the hard-edged geometric structures with the feathered curves of gestural expression.

A recent series of smaller works, known collectively as '*pavement horizons*', marks a distinct shift in viewpoint and scale. Honing in on the juncture at which the buildings rise from the ground, each painting portrays a life-size frontal view of a section of concrete wall and the right angle it forms with the pavement, presenting an intimate record of an ordinarily overlooked aspect of the landscape. While the concrete draws the eye to the surface, they can also conjure the impression of a sublime landscape, an illusion upheld by evocative titles such as *Cloudburst* and *The Monk by the Sea*, the latter named after a work by German Romantic landscape painter Caspar David Friedrich. In contrast to the monumentality of the towers, their human scale places the viewer in close physical proximity to the subject, inviting intimate reflection on the quiet aesthetic qualities of these frequently bypassed details of modern life.

NEW PUBLICATION



Illustrations 263 colour images	US Publication Date 20 October, 2016
Binding Hardback	Page Count 272 pages
ISBN 978-1-906412-79-1	Size 11 3/4 x 9 1/2 in

A new book, *David Hepher, Grain of Concrete* written by art critic, author and documentary film-maker Ben Lewis, will be published in the United States to coincide with this exhibition. The publication charts Hepher's life and work from the 1950s to the present day, tracing a path that begins in an era of the last century that was highly suspicious of figurative painting, through to the recent re-evaluation and rise to prominence of post-war British art within global art history. Aligning the engagement of his work with the critical discourses surrounding the 'end of painting' and conceptual and minimalist strategies throughout the 1960s and 70s, this book presents Hepher's oeuvre as a "*British realist response to modernism*" and a highly theorised engagement with painting. Through Ben Lewis's systematic analysis of Hepher's ideas and processes, *Grain of Concrete* details the optimistic and experimental adoption of architecture as a 'readymade' element in his work, amid a deepening critique of the ideological structure of the modern tower block, and links Hepher with "a generation of artists from the nineties whose work mourns the end of modernism's utopian dreams, through an engagement with its vernacular architecture, technology and design".



Winterreise, 2009-10, Concrete, acrylic, oil & spray paint on canvas, 90 x 277 3/4 in

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Surrey, England in 1935, David Hepher studied at Camberwell School of Art and then the Slade School of Art, London, where he later became Professor and Head of Painting. He had solo exhibitions at London's Serpentine, Whitechapel and Hayward Gallery during the 1970's which marked the beginning of his sustained exploration of the monolithic and sculptural forms of South London's twentieth century skyline. His work is featured in national collections including Tate, Victoria and Albert Museum, Arts Council England and the Contemporary Arts Society. His work has been included in *Unpopular Culture: Grayson Perry Selects from the Arts Council Collection*, Hayward Touring; *British Council Collection: My Yard*, Whitechapel Gallery; *Out of Britain*, National Museum in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; and *Reality: Modern & Contemporary British Painting* at the Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Cambridge and the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, UK. His work is currently on display in a solo exhibition *Windows* at Cartwright Hall, Bradford Museum and Art Gallery, UK.

NOTES TO EDITORS

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Opening Hours: Tuesday - Saturday 10am - 6pm
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