

# TILTING AT WINDMILLS

PETER HOWSON

WORKS ON PAPER



26 MARCH – 24 APRIL 2010

PRIVATE VIEW THURSDAY 25 MARCH 6 – 8PM

## FLOWERS

82 Kingsland Road  
London E2 8DP  
T +44 (0) 20 7920 7777  
[www.flowersgalleries.com](http://www.flowersgalleries.com)

*Tilting at Windmills* 2006, pen and ink on paper, 29 x 22cm

## FOR GENERAL RELEASE

The phrase 'Tilting at Windmills' comes from an episode in Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, where the protagonist mistakes a battery of benign wind turbines for an army of giants, whom he unsuccessfully attempts to slay. Peter Howson has faced many opponents in his life, not least the inner demons that drove him into battles with alcoholism and addiction – adversaries he overcame through a well-documented turn to faith. Whilst these obstacles were far from imagined, they went towards informing a rich artistic imagery that owes as much to psychic struggles as it does to secular experience.

Howson's work evokes a sense of the epic in its appeal to a grand scale, whether through the colossal size of the works themselves, the cast of characters they depict – gargantuan bodied, sinewy limbed – or their religious overtures. On closer reading, however, it becomes apparent that the works are also attuned to the intimate minutiae of human existence: details of the artist's familial and spiritual relationships punctuate his visual parables. It seems fitting to deduce that Howson aspires to be a storyteller rather than a prophet, and that his artistic heroism is of the unequivocally quixotic kind.

This exhibition of works on paper provides us with an insight into the inner workings of Howson's world. The drawings on display here – complex compositions of intricately hatched figures, seductive fragments, enigmatic allusions to the narratives coursing through his wider oeuvre – are studies drawn from Howson's personal cache, held at his studio and hitherto unseen by a public audience. The works, which date from 2005 to the present, confront subjects epic and quotidian, sacred and profane, with each piece claiming an artistic autonomy and many revealing their role in the evolution of Howson's major works on canvas (compelling imagery from the *Don Quixote* and *Harrowing of Hell* series abound). Even when assessed as precursors to the monumental paintings produced by Howson in the last 5 years, these pieces impress and excite in a way that defies their appraisal as mere workings. Indeed, Howson – foremost an expert draughtsman – has himself described them as 'the best' of his work. As a viewer, granted access to this unseen store, it is a revealing admission that inspires easy agreement.

Peter Howson has exhibited with Flowers since the 1980s. His last major exhibition of paintings at the gallery was in 2008. He is currently working on a rendition of the martyrdom of St John Ogilvie for the renovated St Andrew's Cathedral in Glasgow. This will be the biggest commission for a Scottish Catholic cathedral since the 16th century.

For further information and images, please contact Ellie Harrison-Read on 020 7920 7777 or email [ellie@flowersgalleries.com](mailto:ellie@flowersgalleries.com)

[www.flowersgalleries.com](http://www.flowersgalleries.com)