

Making Space
Edmund de Waal

This year the team of artists I work with have been scattered to their own workshops and studios. This exhibition is a moment before the year turns to see what they have been creating. It is a huge privilege for me to spend my working life with such talented colleagues, and a simple pleasure to see their work here. They make this space theirs.

In many ways the work of Sun Kim needs the shadowy spaces of a Japanese teahouse to fully appreciate it. In a teahouse there is the attentiveness to one object at a time, the picking up and feeling the balance and weight of a vessel, the texture of the unglazed base and the way a glaze sits on the fineness of a rim. You pick one of these extraordinary works up and you know it is superlatively made: the softly swelling volumes and acute definitions of planes seem almost musical in their rhythms. You know that you are overhearing a conversation with elements of Japanese, Korean and Chinese art in the sensitivity of their making, the rigour of their thinking through of formality and relaxation.

And they are also shadow-catchers. Put one of Sun's pots down and see how the light meets the sides of one of these cut bowls or jars. You know that this is another meditation on

time that can sit alongside the way that shadows figure in tea-houses, under the footrings of tea-bowls, in ink paintings.

With the vessels of Barry Stedman there is a passionate connection to landscape. These vessels connect to a long tradition of art made in direct, almost bodily response to the weather. I think of Constable lying on his back on Hampstead Heath painting his cloudscapes, obsessively recording the procession of shadows above him. I think of Peter Lanyon in the 1950s in his glider feeling the pressure of the Cornish winds, painting his iconic images of the air. Barry paints and draws, setting off in the rain with his sketchbooks. And here with these vessels that have been thrown then cut open and altered, scored and handled, we feel the tension between areas of intense marking and areas of openness, energetic dribbles and splashes counterpointed with voids, poolings and washes of colour.

Above all with Barry's work there is the wonderful drama between slowness and speed, the feeling that there are places of lyrical flow and places of almost cussed work. Samuel Beckett, writing of his friend the painter Avigdor Arikha, captured this ebb and flow: 'By the hand it unceasingly changes the eye unceasingly changed...Truce for a

space and the marks of what it is to be and be in face of. These deep marks show.'

Chris Riggio has a particular attentiveness to the world. He is an urban mudlarker, a finder of abandoned treasures on the streets of the city. He finds eighteenth-century prints, porcelain teapots, silver cutlery, a Chinese Zhong. The ragpicker, said Walter Benjamin, always has one eye on the gutter, able to see poetic possibilities in the discarded. And this is a start, a mode of enquiry about the world. Chris takes things apart with his eye and then with his hands, technics and poetics meshing together.

He is a sort of architect manqué. He looks at how planes meet, the line of connection where materials have to converse, the absorbency and porosity of surfaces. Bone china, lathes, firing glass and ceramics together are part of Chris' extraordinary dexterity. In this exhibition he is presenting tables made from ceramic. It should not be possible to do so, but he has worked out how to achieve this, the complexity vanishing in the beauty of the finished object. One of his heroes is Valentine Schlegel, the French artist whose sculptures extended from hand and object to room-scape. She created fireplaces that swirled into walls and niches: she created spaces for her

works to inhabit. That is what Chris is doing here.

And...finally finials. The finials that adorn his beautiful lidded jars are moments of baroque delight. He understands that you must end with joy, find pleasure at the first exploratory touch.

The drawings, paintings and monoprints of Stephanie Forrest share one essential characteristic. In them you feel the hand and eye and heart are searching, transitive. They are not works in search of stasis, the perfect singular moment, but seem to be a response to the world as it unfolds. And it unfolds in her art with a gorgeous depth of colour and tonality. TJ Clark wrote on Twombly, there is a 'wish to expose himself to the world as it' and in Stephanie's practice the ever-changing, the mutable have become her subject. She puts herself into landscape to experience how light moves on water, how shadows congregate and disperse second by second, the passage of clouds.

For some of this year Stephanie was in lockdown in the country near a river and it was here that she spent her weeks in all weathers, at all times of the day. This makes sense. The river, the landscape and the body in water are core to her questioning sensibility.

She has written that her 'best work only seems to happen when I'm in deep water. And I guess that's what much of the work is about; immersion.' Immersion is where boundaries of the self feel contingent, uncertain. You are not certain where you begin and where you end. Her bathers share this experience of being in the moment with her studies of dancers. She has obsessively worked both from life, drawing a solitary dancer in the studio or on stage, and returned repeatedly to Poussin's The Golden Calf with that great swirling vortex of bodies, immersed in their Dionysian rapture. And these series of works in the exhibition are deeply affecting. This moment is here and then it passes. Et in Arcadia Ego: we are here for such a short while. Beautiful mutability is a sort of mortality too.

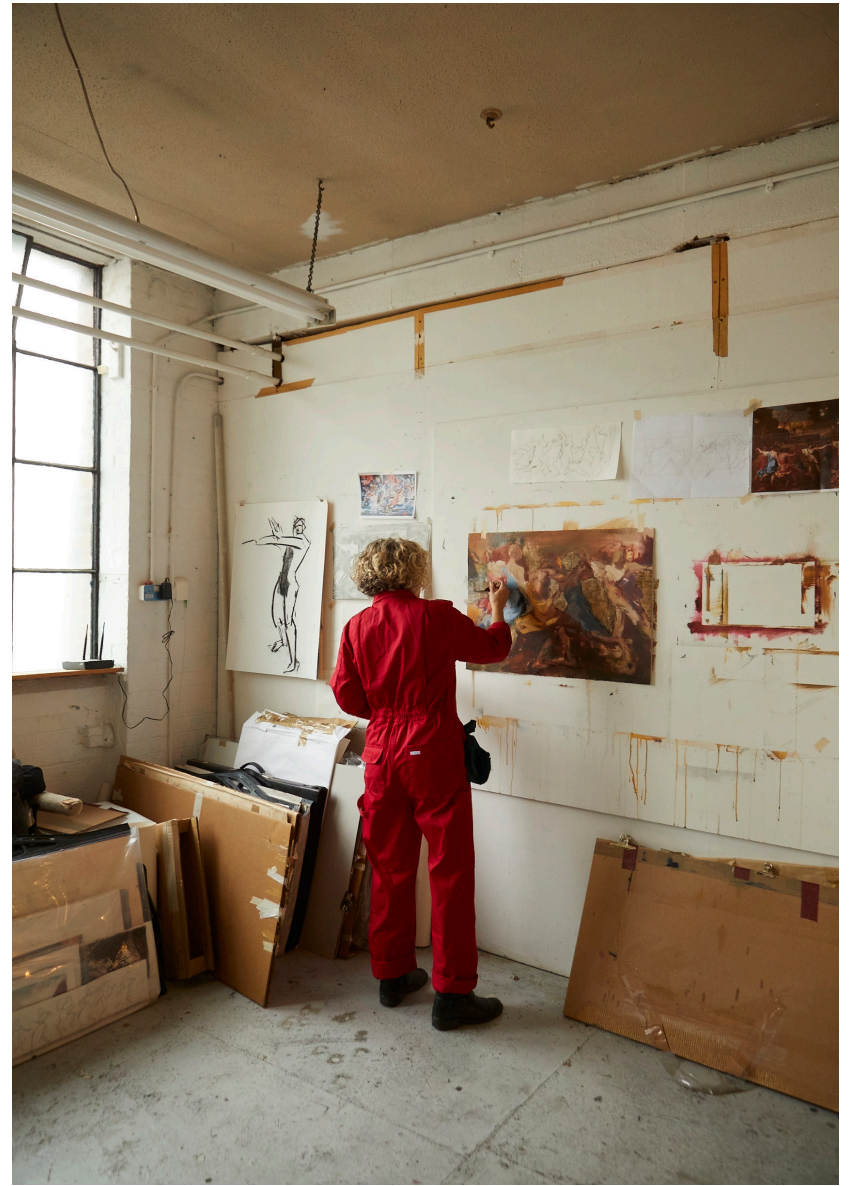
Stephanie Forrest

Stephanie Forrest (b.1986) is an artist based in South London working across drawing, painting and print. At the core of her practice is a lyrical, painterly exploration of movement and light. With a background in Art History, having first studied at the Courtauld Institute, she combines a wide scope of references with an intuitive creative approach. Rhythmic, gestural and immersive, her recent work explores the experience of movement and the inner landscape of the body, responding to dance as live performance and in the paintings of Poussin.

Forrest is also a tutor at the Royal Drawing School where she completed *The Drawing Year* in '18-19 and is currently on the Off-Site Painting Programme at Turps Art School, London. She was awarded the ACS Drawing Prize in 2019 and has work in The Royal Collection. After a number of years in galleries and museums, she started working with Edmund de Waal in 2011 as his Studio Manager and, since 2018, managing projects and exhibitions.

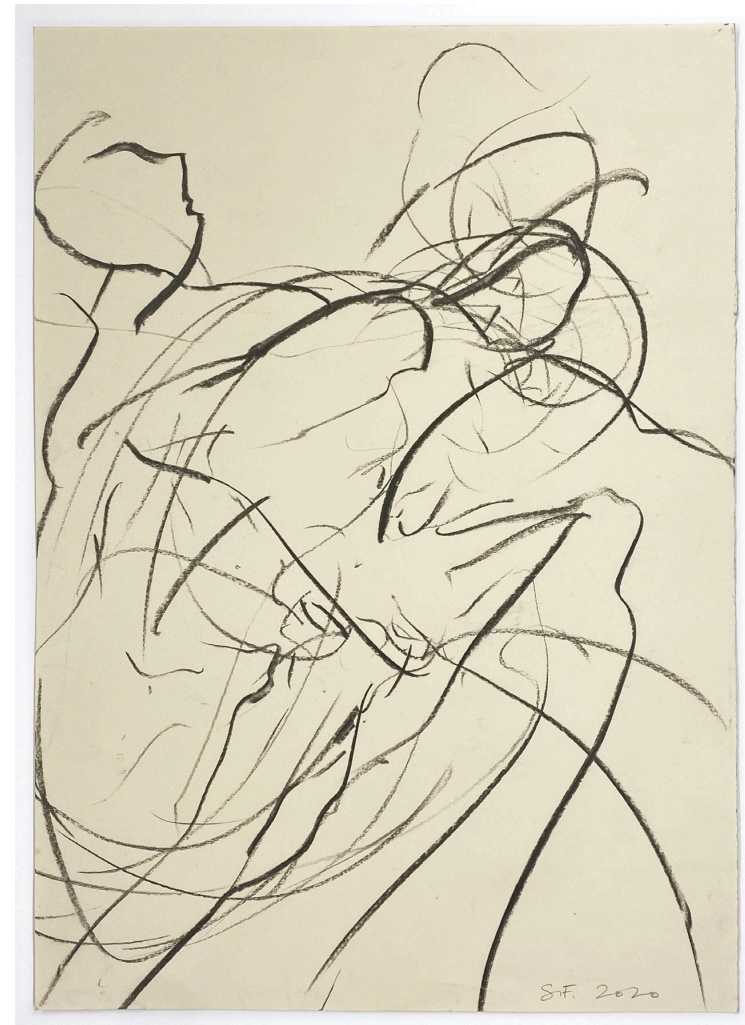


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The Dance (after Poussin), 2020
Oil on Arches paper
56 x 76 cm



Poussin Dancers, 2020
Charcoal on paper
59.4 x 42 cm