

Happy Days – Michael Roberts

Patrick Heide Contemporary Art 25th March – 1st April 2023

Patrick Heide Contemporary Art are pleased to present **Happy Days** a guest artist exhibition of recent paintings, prints and drawings by Michael Roberts. With curation by Marianne Magnin.

Robert's body of work has a strong graphic and pop sensibility. Direct, colourful and brutally honest, it is childishly joyful. At the same time it expresses his outrage at injustice and offers a strident commentary about environmental and political issues. The transmission of his images is vibrant and striking. Where you find subtlety, you will find humour, but more often than not you will find a strong, direct, exuberant, angry message in an explosion of primary colours with a bouquet of text to accompany them.

Humour is steeped into a macabre discourse reminiscent of Mardi Gras' transgressions and James Ensor's grotesque depiction of our world's drifting. There is simplified imagery in the manner of Philip Guston's late period and of *Looney Tunes*. Roberts's painterly quest led him to the Chicago Imagists, who have been a continual influence on his practice. His works comments on establishment failures and our insecurities and fears.

"My primary concerns are with narrative, surface, repetition, layering and colour, influenced by comic books. Often the beginning of work is gleaned from observed situations, books read, mundane encounters, the jetsam and flotsam of everyday life. Once embedded, a process of evaluation begins, weighing up and worrying, formulating a working narrative until the inception. My concerns are with the human condition and this remains constant throughout my practice" - MR.

There is generosity, to be found in the imagination, materials and techniques deployed. Up close, complexity and precision unfold. The works hover between abstraction and figuration, never repeating themselves, individually constructed by using a wide range of textures and components, from oil, ink, resin, glitter, glass beads, gold leaves to felt, dust and found wires.

"Scenarios are created to examine our anxieties and fears, places are both familiar and uncomfortable. The architecture is prosaic, almost banal, the landscapes indeterminate, events are given space to unfold. These paintings act as modern fables for our uncertain and fractured times" - MR.

Roberts born in England gained an MA in Printmaking from the Royal College of Art, London and a BA from Nottingham Trent University. He exhibits internationally and teaches on the Fine Art MA at the Arts University Bournemouth UK. He works between London, England and Provence, France.

Private view - Saturday 25th March 2.00pm onwards

Artist talk - Saturday 1st April 3.00pm

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Down On The Farm – by Michael Roberts

Well into his eighties the Admiral stood at least 6ft 4 his red silk socks, not bad going for a man built like one of his battleships. He dressed as only those posh English country people do: although everything was of the finest materials and cut, he looked nothing short of a dog's dinner. An evening smoking jacket over a dress shirt, thick green corduroy's worn at the knees completed by a pair of exquisite gold monogrammed slip-on black velvet slippers. For someone who knew how to bark and get people jumping, his voice was surprisingly light - almost boyish. He devoted his time between his London club and the estate he kept in Devon.

At first glance, the farmhouse was nothing more than a large 1970's house found in any well-heeled cul-de-sac. It was surrounded by bucolic countryside complete with tumble down farm buildings, wonky tin-lidded barns, cobbled yards and the remnants of ancient cob and lime walls. But it soon became clear, these were survivors, remnants that escaped the fire which torched the original medieval manor.

The ceiling of the main room was low which made the admiral seem even bigger. Like him, the furnishing were a mishmash of styles and periods. Turkish Kilims on top of Chinese rugs. Teetering piles of books, lamps without shades, newspapers, magazines and children's toys littering the floor. Most of the art was late Victorian in dusty gilt frames: portraits of ancient family members stared glumly at us, lions looked bored in London Zoo, beautiful botanical drawings and then the odd contemporary abstract by my friend, the family's eldest son. At one end of the room was a large open hearth, a survivor of the fire. It faced some ancient wood panelling that had also been rescued.

The table was set for lunch for six. Our hostess was a gentlewoman with an easy smile and keen mind. We were joined by a corpulent local farmer with labrador, and the Admiral's wife.

She was a revelation. An eighty-year-old woman acting as if she was twelve. She was dressed like a little pixie in floaty floral silks complete with pearls and satin pumps. She looked miniscule beside the huge Admiral.

And she didn't stop for a moment. A pirouette here, a curtsy there. Round and round the room she went humming to herself in a state of apparently oblivious rapture. No one battered a word – but it was clear her mind was gone.

Lunch was served. The Admiral sat at on end of the table and gently bid his Lady '*dance*' to sit at the other. She swooped across the room without a murmur and sat, still at last.

The Admiral opened a bottle of vintage Dom Perignon and glasses were filled. Without missing a beat, with glass in hand his extra-ordinary wife stood suddenly, looked us each in the eye and wished us all "Happy Days".

All the while, outside the rain lashed down, cobbles became a lake and the afternoon darkened.