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WHEN IS ENOUGH

paintings by Raoul Orzabal

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Raoul Orzabal



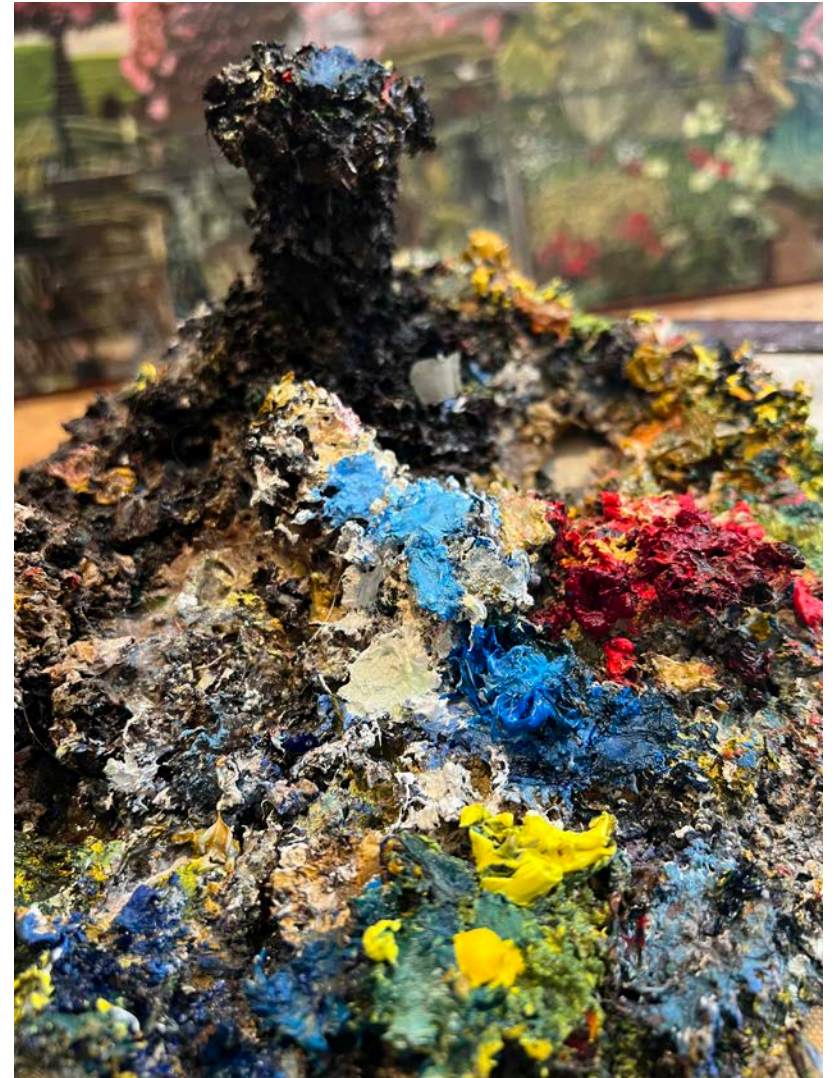
Introduction

In this the second exhibition of Raoul Orzabal's paintings at HSoA Gallery we see a new collection of work that is completely engaging, his 'song' is of physical shapes ordered meticulously within the pictorial plane.

I am grateful to James Fox, Director of Studies in History of Art at Emmanuel College, Cambridge, commentator on 20th-century and contemporary art and broadcaster, who has kindly prepared the insightful accompanying catalogue essay. In familiarising himself with Orzabal's work he makes observations which help us to see deeply into Orzabal's methods and thinking.

Thank you James Fox and thank you Raoul Orzabal for this spectacular show of which I am very proud.

Isabel H Langtry Principal HSoA





An essay by James Fox on Raoul Orzabal's 'When is Enough' exhibition

Raoul Orzabal is, like many great artists, a frustrated architect. Each of his paintings is a labyrinth – a hyperreal world that can't be fully understood let alone successfully navigated. Cities morph into skies, rocks mutate into seas, roads lead everywhere but go nowhere. As we journey through these Daedalian creations, three-dimensional space stretches and perforates around us before inevitably collapsing in on itself.

Orzabal's pictures have often been compared to the uncanny topographies of Surrealism and the glossy impossibilities of AI-generated imagery. His real influences, however, lie further back in art history. He draws inspiration from the idealised vistas of Claude, Poussin and Canaletto, and the technical precision associated with Old Master painting. One of his works, called *Tourists*, contains a group of dancing figures drawn directly from Ambrogio Lorenzetti's fourteenth-century masterpiece, the *Allegory of Good and Bad Government*.

Of all Orzabal's art-historical influences, the most persistent originate in early twentieth-century modernism. In their fragmented geometries and multiple perspectives, his paintings employ the same visual vocabulary as the Cubists, Futurists and Vorticists. It's impossible to look at these deconstructed worlds and not recall the tumbling streetscapes of Robert Delaunay, the palpitating panoramas of Umberto Boccioni, and the vertiginous skylines of Wyndham Lewis and Edward Wadsworth.

Take, for instance, *The Estate*. This staggeringly complex painting builds, from the brutalist architecture of social housing, an Escheresque labyrinth of concrete and pebble-dash, its balconies zigzagging across each other in paradoxical parallaxes, its towers rising into gun-grey skies. It is a thrilling paean to modern British urbanism, but also perhaps a critique of it. The pavement at the bottom right is the location of a notorious fight in Stanley Kubrick's *A Clockwork Orange*.

Not all of Orzabal's works are so dystopian. This



exhibition contains a number of highly lyrical landscapes. *Somewhere in Scotland* is a winning portrait of the Highlands, the artist depicting its granite hills and wind-rippled grasses with the meticulous naturalism of a Pre-Raphaelite. In *Cliffs of Crete* he dissolves the craggy limestone coast of Chania into a kaleidoscope of blues and turquoises. And in *Rockies*, a picture recently shortlisted for the prestigious Homiens Art Prize, Orzabal transforms a North American canyon into a scintillating tapestry of vegetables and minerals.

Most of Orzabal's pictures are created in a multi-stage process that marries old traditions with new technologies. He usually begins by taking photographs of his subjects before collating them in Adobe Photoshop: overlapping motifs, breaking them down, selectively erasing elements within them. The resulting digital collage is then painstakingly translated into paint, which Orzabal builds up in layers, rendering every detail with exacting precision. It can take him several months to produce a single painting.

For all its visual and technical virtuosity, Orzabal's oeuvre is much more than mere image-making. All

of his works engage with profound and urgent ideas, each conveying a deeply researched and considered message. *Carbon Deck*, inspired by the smoggy skies of New York, ruminates on the perils of urban pollution. *Aqua Altered* depicts Venice's Grand Canal, whose overflowing waters allude to the threat posed by rising sea levels to the city's future.

Like all important artists, Raoul Orzabal holds a mirror up to his – and our – age. His work reflects an era of disorientating speed and change, in which relationships between nature and culture, humans and their environment, are radically being rewritten. And yet his creations also offer respite from the chaos around them, rooted in the old and enduring value of paint applied to canvas.

James Fox





Artist Statement

I am lost in the expanse of each painting that I immerse myself in. I sort of let myself go in the complexity of amalgamating images that I want to draw together, it is a complete and total focus.

The application of colours and segments within each composition resound in me with the memory of each location. When painting these colour-saturated 'scales' that I explore, the memory of light and atmosphere thunder deeply inside me and echo through the brush itself as it touches the canvas!

This new series of works are bigger and more expansive than before.

Raoul Orzabal





Carbon Deck, oil on canvas, 2018, 156 X 106 cm





Dark Beneath Light, oil on canvas, 2019, 203 X 162 cm





Tourists, oil on canvas, 2021, 220 X 162 cm





The Estate, oil on canvas, 2023, 150 X 121 cm





Reminder, oil on canvas, 2019, 150 X 111 cm





Aqua Altered (unfinished at time of publication), oil on canvas, 2024, 96 X 76 cm





The Rockies, oil on canvas, 2022, 97 X 77cm





Somewhere in Scotland, oil on canvas, 2021, 97 X 77 cm





Cliffs of Crete, oil on board, 2023, 81 X 61 cm





Chris, oil on canvas, 2022, 50 X 40 cm





Central Park, oil on board, 2024, 50 X 40cm





Embankment I, oil on board, 2024, 41 X 31cm





Embankment II, oil on board, 2024, 45 X 36cm





Heath Ponds in Winter, oil on board, 2024, 36 X 26cm

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Front and back image: Details of 'Dark Beneath
Light', oil on canvas, 2019.

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HSoA was founded in 1946 by a group of local
artists, including Henry Moore, Bernard Gay
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garde. Today the school is an independent
centre of artistic excellence, providing first class,
affordable tuition in traditional observational and
experimental creative skills. Our branding includes
the line 'Unleashing the artist in everyone', a direct
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this has been the move to a state-of-the-art new
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