

# DANNY FOX

*As He Bowed His Head To Drink*

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Established 1923



I SHOULD OF KILLED YOU WHEN I HAD THE CHANCE

*oil on canvas, 2015*  
160 x 180 cm

## FOREWORD

WES LANG

Adventure and misadventure. Living and breathing risks being taken. A deft sense of where he came from, and a willingness to not know where he's going.

Danny Fox creates pieces that excite me. They have granted me a chance to be moved by painting again, which is a rarified occurrence these days. When I saw his work that was created in Los Angeles earlier this year, I had to have it. Had to. We have never met. A few emails back and forth at odd hours...that is the extent of our relationship. Luckily, in my home, hanging high on a wall, his presence is in my life on a daily basis. We have coffee together most mornings, listen to a lot of music and share more than the occasional vodka. I see so many things in what he does, most importantly it is art that is carrying on the essential conversation that has been going on generation after generation, movement after movement. Embracing influence, displaying it proudly and pushing himself to make it all his very own. Working because he has no choice in the matter. This is art that needs to be seen, needs to be discussed, shit on, lifted up, liked, hated and everywhere else in between.





**DANNY FOX: AS HE BOWED HIS HEAD TO DRINK**  
SIMON BAYLISS

Danny Fox is a prolific producer of big, punchy, crude paintings often of lone cowboys and cavalymen on horseback, bullfighters, ugly sex scenes and ladyboys. He is a sort of self-made artist, who has avoided art education and some of the typical routes of professional development and this personal narrative, however insignificant in terms of his sophistication as an artist, is unmistakably present within the work. The recurrent motifs, of spirited horsemen, mostly conjured from the artist's imagination, could be self-identified aliases. As the titles *Return From Exile* and *Fatal Decision* suggest, these are not respectable cattle herders, but outlaws and fugitives, rebels and lone heroes, harnessing animal power and facing the elements as well as danger from other criminals and the law. By painting archetypes of spirited adventure and reckless individual freedom, Danny tells a personal story of libido and defiance with a sense of romantic authority. Yet any gratuitous masculinity in his work is diffused, made funny or ambiguous, by the childlike delineation of his characters, who often have wonky grimaces or an uneasy gaze. In *Fatal Decision* the dark horse has a manic red eye, and in the bright red sky the clouds are fried eggs, seemingly mocking the protagonist's uncertain, perhaps doomed, journey.

Danny's work appears both uninhibited by traditional values and seemingly indifferent to aesthetic trends in contemporary art. This is apparent in the unaffected crudeness of his imagery and paint handling and the earnestness of his subject matter. Danny is not playing his game unawares, however. He grew up in St Ives, Cornwall, which has a rich heritage as an outpost for modern and contemporary art, with its own culture and mythologies. His painting *Gasworks* depicts the Tate St Ives building as a wobbly black and white line drawing, echoing the pictorial principles of other so-called self-taught artists such as Alfred Wallis or Bryan Pearce, yet its minimal form reduces it to an almost abstract motif. Both the title, which indicates the former use of the site, and the coarse reductivism, perhaps referring to Tate St Ives' legacy as a base for home-grown formalism, is ambiguous in tone, simultaneously reverent and ironic.



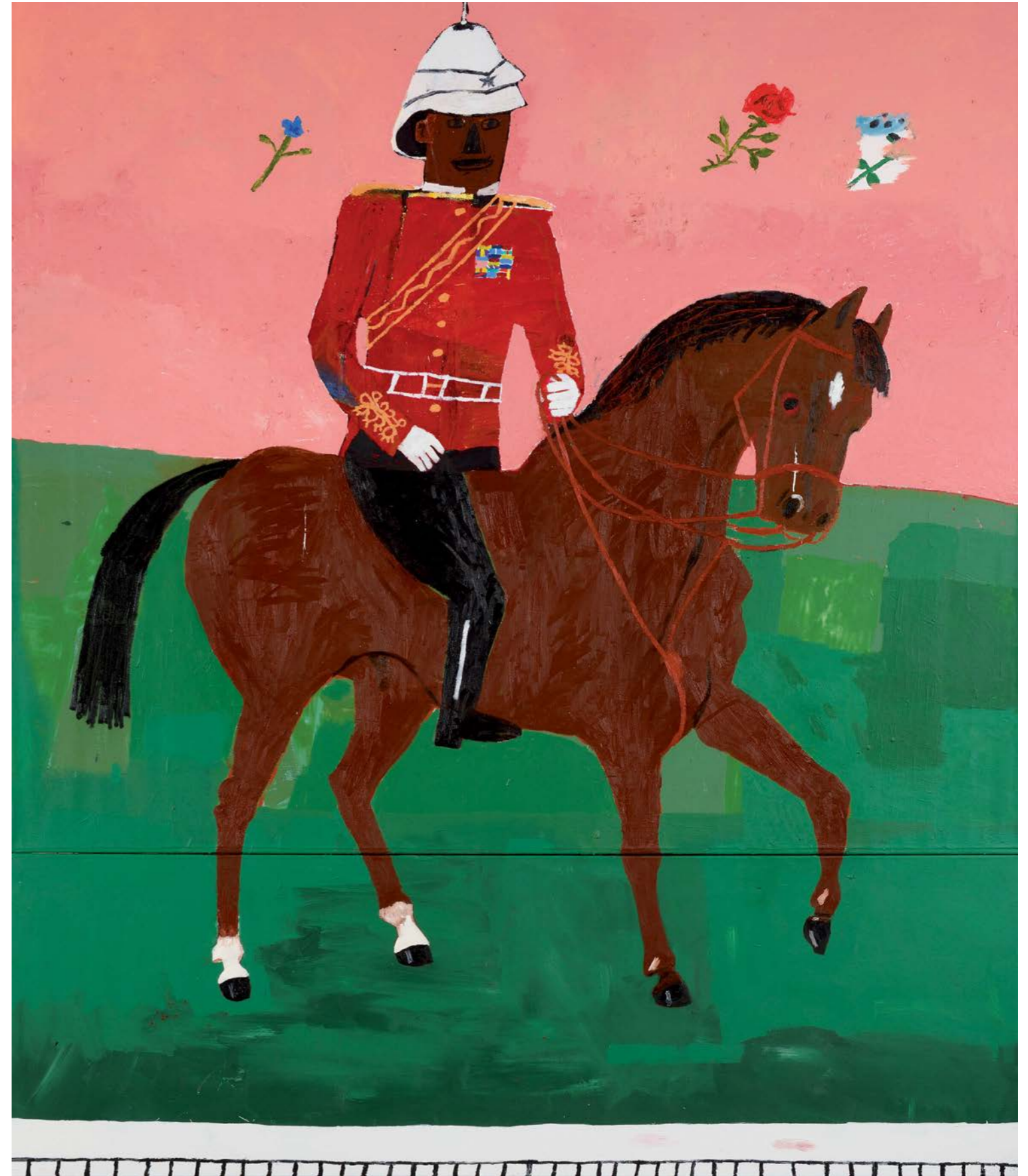
*What Are Cornish Boys To Do?*, the title of a painting depicting two men in cowboy hats, hints that the setting for Danny's Wild West paintings could also be Cornwall, where he grew up; the Wild West of England or, for some, a potentially autonomous Celtic state. Instilled among many from the region is a yearning to escape offset by deep regional pride, along with a humoured loathing of 'emmetts' (tourists) and a suspicion of anyone who moves there. Iconoclasm seems to drive Danny's choice to paint an American utopia. He would have grown up surrounded by artists striving to reflect the raw beauty and drama of Cornwall's coastal landscape in which the prevailing aesthetic is unhealthy kitsch advocating leisurely appreciation of local scenery. Danny instead presents what could be read as an insider's perspective, suggesting that Cornwall, like the Wild West, is a fictionalised place that is more dramatic and unlimited than its reality, and furthermore, to live and survive there one has to be wily, self-reliant and unsentimental.

In reference to recent paintings, featuring what look like Anglo-Indian cavalry, Danny stated that, for him, 'the horse and rider is one of the most potent images man has come up with'. Yet the solemnity of this statement is irreverently overturned by his description of the characters as 'blokes wearing uniforms with telly addictions and alcohol problems'. *Yellow Haired Woman Brings Nothing But Pain*, alludes to the pictorial narrative in Velázquez's *Portrait of the Count-Duke of Olivares* in which a man pointing a baton sits tall in the saddle on a rearing horse. Yet in Danny's painting the virility of the image is tempered by the encroaching pink background. The thick impervious paint, typical in much of his work, conceals some of the history of its making, while little openings reveal fragments of past compositions. A sinister floating eye, a yellow rose with a drip of blood and the bust of a blond-haired woman like a ship's figurehead, haunt the picture as dream signs choreographed for the viewer's eye to flick between. In *Forget About The Birds (they're someone else's problem now)*, the composition is more complex, and has evidently evolved somewhat intuitively through a series of unplanned revisions. A man with two ears on one side of his head sits behind a round table, which is also a tree with three birds in it, above which floats a patterned tea set. The formal components, of round green shapes inhabiting warm passages of pink and orange, echo Patrick Heron's paintings of the 1960s. Although Heron may not be an obvious influence, it was his former studio that Danny occupied while recently working in St Ives, and provides some insight into how Danny absorbs stimuli.

In Danny's recent paintings, which hint at defence, combat and military pageantry, there is, mysteriously, an absence of an opponent. Is it the self-congratulating contemporary art world, the 'emmett', the critic, or the viewer? The context of the exhibition may be useful for understanding his outlook. Set at The Redfern Gallery, a stronghold for Modern British art, and representing artists such as Patrick Procktor, Eileen Agar and Christopher Wood, could suggest that Danny's romantic inclinations have led him to look backwards for his cues on where to locate his ideas. The horsemen are perhaps roaming as outcasts in a bygone painterly world. Yet Danny's naturally provocative sensibility prevents him from appearing anachronistic. His admirable seriousness about painting is balanced by a liberal streak of irreverence and wry humour, and a readiness to reveal signs of impotence and sensitivity within an outward message of vigour. Despite there being no rules in art, Danny noticeably pitches himself on the periphery of an insider's game. This paradoxical position of knowing ingenuousness, plus his self-reliant instincts make him more 'outlaw' than 'outsider'.

AS HE BOWED HIS HEAD TO DRINK

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014*  
330 x 285 cm



FATAL DECISION

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2015*  
240 x 285 cm





LOVE IS AS CERTAIN AS DEATH

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014*  
160 x 180 cm





JUDITH'S SCARF IS A BASEMENT CURTAIN

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2015*  
155 x 155 cm



LIVE IN THE SKY OR DIE IN THE DIRT

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2015*  
155 x 155 cm





FLORAL BONDAGE

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2015*  
155 x 155 cm

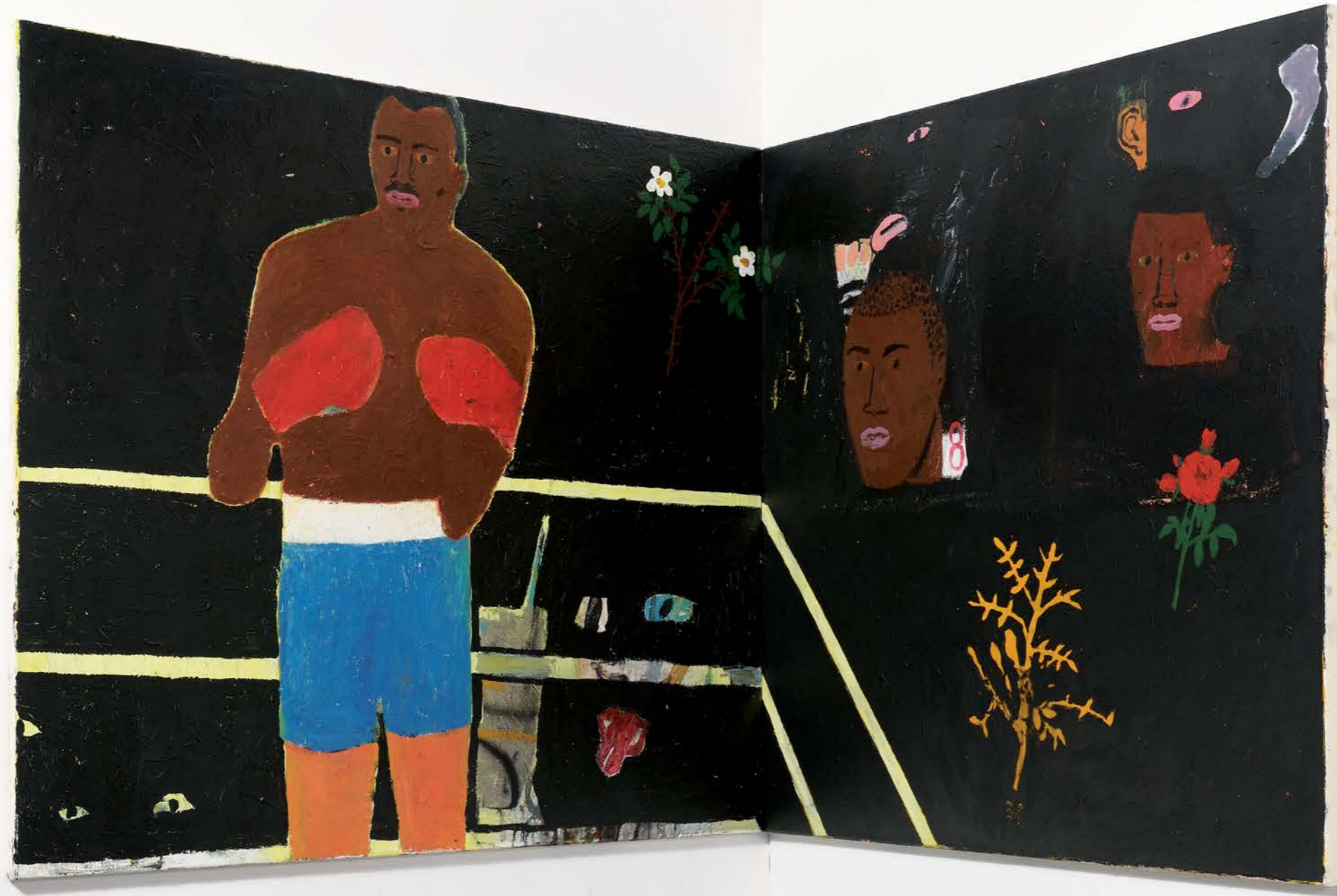


YELLOW HAired WOMAN BRINGS NOTHING BUT PAIN

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2015*  
155 x 155 cm







SPORTS WIDOW  
oil on canvas, 2014  
140 x 300 cm

11:11

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014*  
210 x 210 cm





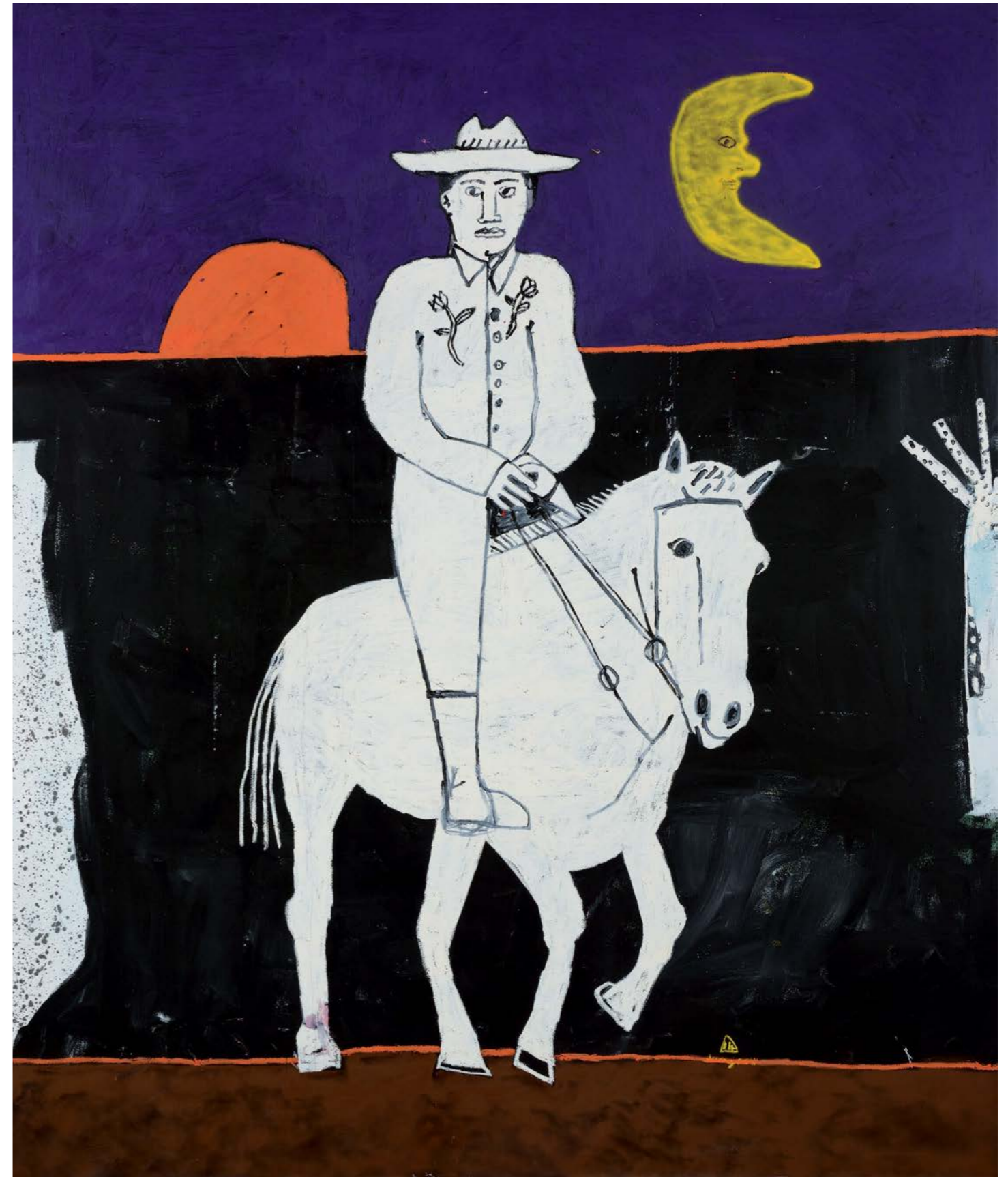


FORGET ABOUT THE BIRDS (THEY'RE SOMEONE ELSE'S PROBLEM NOW)

oil and acrylic on canvas, 2015  
210 x 240 cm

RETURN FROM EXILE

*oil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 2015*  
285 x 240 cm







JUMBO'S CLOWN ROOM

*oil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 2015*  
155 x 182 cm

UNTITLED

acrylic on board  
42 x 60 cm









# THE HORSES HAVE BEEN GOOD TO ME

DANNY FOX AND SUE WEBSTER IN CONVERSATION WITH REBA MAYBURY

**RM:** So how did you find out about Danny, Sue?

**SW:** Danny was propping up a bar and invited me to watch his band that were playing that night. I didn't make it but I did bump into him again about a year later, and he then invited me to see his paintings. I thought, what about the band?! I didn't realise at the time that he was a painter. When I first went to his tiny studio, it was hard to look properly through the layers of paintings that were stacked against all four walls. Most of those paintings had never seen the light of day but I was encouraged by their fluidity, which reminded me in a way of Picasso, although Danny's subject matter was much dirtier.

**RM:** Did you know about Sue's work before you met her?

**DF:** Yes but I had only seen it from a distance. Since then Sue has given me all of her books; now I know everything about it! The first thing I loved about Sue's work was the guts, there's bravery in it to me.

**SW:** Tim and I made all of our early work, all of those huge sculptures not knowing if they would even be shown let alone sell, because it's just something you have to do – you have to get it out there or else you'll go crazy. But really, when I was at school, all I ever wanted was to form a band. Being a successful artist wasn't part of the agenda.

**RM:** How did you feel about art at school Danny?

**DF:** I didn't feel anything about it because I didn't really know what it was – I still don't. I presume it's whatever you make it to be, like anything else. All my art education came from books, but now I'm getting into the art world I'm meeting a lot of other artists so I'm learning from them. I've had some really critical conversations about my work recently with artists I respect. That's what I imagine is supposed to happen at school.

**RM:** Which artists?

**DF:** Well Sue, of course, but recently I've been talking a lot with Torey Thornton and Henry Taylor, both American painters. It's been good to talk about painting specifically. I've never really been able to do that with anyone. It has been great but also hard when things get critical, a lot of self-examination.

**SW:** In retrospect it seems ridiculous to think how we are expected to go to art school in order to learn how to 'do art'. It should just progress naturally through trial and error. I guess I was lucky that my art teacher saw potential in me and bothered to guide me through the education system and onto art school. I found it very embarrassing to begin with as I wasn't encouraged by my own family. That's why when I met Danny I found it so refreshing that he hadn't done any of that.

**RM:** I think that is why you are especially interesting Danny. When I think of people our age, people who I was at school with at Saint Martins, for example, the art world was – and is – completely careerist. What about other young artists you like, are there any young artists that you find refreshing and non-strategic?

**DF:** I've always been waiting to be a part of some kind of movement like Sue had with the YBAs, but there's no one, I'm here on my own. I think I thought you had to be part of a group or something. I mentioned Torey and Henry before because they are predominantly painters. I've spent some time in the States recently and met other painters who at least appreciate the same work.

**SW:** The bottom line to success is to come up with something original that didn't exist before, that's why the YBA movement was so successful. It was like when punk exploded onto the music scene, it obliterated all that had happened before it – like it no longer existed. They didn't sit and wait for it to happen, they made it happen themselves which is the very core of existential thinking. I feel that the new generation are trying to follow a model, but you need guts to lead.

**DF:** True. I mean that was true for your generation. It seemed that the only way to become successful in that time was to be 'shocking' and it was punk in that sense and also in the way that it created its own scene, like you said. But the essence of punk to me was the 'do it yourself' aesthetic which wasn't there. You didn't see the hand of the artist anymore, it felt like it was all made in a factory. I hear it compared to Britpop more often, New Labour, new money. I don't include you in that statement Sue: of all the YBAs I think your work is the most honest and I feel like your work has kept its

integrity throughout, for the record! That's probably why we are having this conversation because you're in it for the art, always have been, despite your success!

**RM:** Why do you paint horses?

**DF:** I just think it's one of the greatest images that man has come up with, the horse and rider, along with the Corpus Christi. The image of a man riding a horse, because it represents so many things. I'm always looking for the image, that powerful image, I don't know why it particularly strikes a chord with me.

**SW:** I think it's the romantic in you.

**DF:** Maybe. Historically, though, it's more brutal.

**RM:** So it's the history? What history do you like in particular?

**DF:** I'm tempted to say military, but not really. Two of the paintings in this show are based on military watercolours by Richard Simkin. I was just so drawn to them that I wanted to work with them. All history is human history really. I used to work the antique fairs so I picked up a lot then. I have these two little horse models I work from, they are really old and disfigured so they help with the weirdness. Buying and selling old objects sparked an interest, anything from flags to human bones, but finding dirty, fucked up paintings by unknown painters was the best. Art history is kind of the history of everything.

**RM:** Is there a particular part of art history?

**DF:** I like to think about van Gogh, I like that time in history. It's mad to think that when he was sitting in his bedroom painting sunflowers at the same time Jesse James was out robbing trains in America. It doesn't seem right to me,



WHITE GIRL'S SLEEP STANDING UP

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014*  
160 x 180 cm



historically speaking, but it is. And I love to think about Picasso in the South of France painting in his pants in the sunshine.

**RM:** Where would you like to travel with your painting?

**DF:** I think Asia. Also Africa, maybe Ghana? Nigeria? Back to Kenya? Go see my family at the horse ranch in Zimbabwe?

**SW:** Your family have a ranch in Zimbabwe?

**DF:** Yeah, my biological lot, it's a long story but in short there's a best-selling book about it. I've never read it. Anyway the story is that they had a farm in Zimbabwe, but when the black people took the farms off the white people they were forced out at gunpoint, so they rounded up all of the horses that were left and took them to Mozambique.

**RM:** Have you ever done a residency abroad?

**DF:** Half the paintings in this show were painted on a residency in St Ives. I painted in Patrick Heron's old studio for three months. I also made about ten paintings in L.A. directly after that but I'm currently doing a short term residency at Tim and Sue's studio on Chance Street. Its very intense being in the heart of east London in such an iconic building, it feels like you're in a castle while the battle rages on around you.

**SW:** Tim and I were invited to do a residency in St Barts in 2009, and I remember it rendered us impotent. Here was this beautiful tropical island where the sun was shining every day, there was greenery everywhere, but we both found it impossible to work in that environment. Tim just went surfing and I longed for the speed of the city, the dirt, the danger and the darkness. I couldn't feed off the beauty, I just didn't feel inspired.

**DF:** I could easily work in that environment, I would be the opposite of impotent, whatever that is.

**RM:** Why are you interested in rawness and debauchery so much?

**SW:** Because to me it's real life – it's what I can relate to.

**RM:** Danny, do you think your work is dependent on the city?

**SW:** I think your best work is.

**DF:** I've always been attracted to that side of life so of course it's going to be in the work somewhere, but I try to paint it in a kind of innocent light, like the stripper paintings, they're not sexual, just fun.

**RM:** How do you feel about your success?

**DF:** I feel that it's deserved, I've worked hard. Although at this point I wouldn't call it success. It's just a bit of recognition. I don't get too ahead of myself, I'm still at the beginning of my career even though it feels like I've been grinding for so long.

**RM:** Sue, what do you think of young artists today?

**SW:** When I look at young artists today, their vision doesn't seem to span that far ahead of what's in front of them. They're not interested in changing the world. Being an artist to them is simply a lifestyle decision. They don't understand that most of us make art because we have to and if we didn't we'd probably kill someone. It's that simple. Ambition to them is to be invited to all the right parties, have a Coutts bank account and a tab at a cool

restaurant. Whereas my ambition was to have independence and security. The first thing I did when I had money was to buy a warehouse where I could live and work in peace. The rest is history.

**DF:** What you guys have got is pretty daunting for someone from my generation, it's hard to put those dots together. Starting with nothing and ending up with a mansion.

**SW:** When I was at art school I was looking towards Andy Warhol. I guess my dots are bigger than your dots.

**DF:** ...

**RM:** Danny, when did you get to that point where you could paint full-time?

**DF:** I've always painted full-time, but had to work jobs at the same time. I was working on building sites until about two years ago. That's when I started to sell enough work to quit the jobs.

**RM:** How do you think that's changed your work?

**DF:** It's made the paintings bigger, I can afford more materials now.

**RM:** Where do you see your work going in the next couple of years?

**DF:** You never know where the work's going to go, if you did there would be no point working to find out where it's going to take you. I do know, though, that I'd like to carry on travelling and working.

**RM:** What have been your favourite themes explored in your work so far?

**DF:** The horses have been good to me. I've only done about fifteen horse paintings so far but already people act like that's my thing. Like Hockney said he only did around ten swimming pool paintings and that's what you think of when you think of his work. The Cornish landscape series I worked on last winter was really interesting to me.

**RM:** Do you enjoy painting women?

**DF:** Yeah, actually I think Sue has my favourite painting of women, *White Girls Sleep Standing Up*, with the strippers from The White Horse pub on Shoreditch High Street with the pound jar in it. I was looking at it today and thought to myself I got it in that one.



WHAT ARE CORNISH BOYS TO DO

acrylic on canvas, 2014  
160 x 180 cm



COTTON FIELDS

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014*  
160 x 180 cm





TEQUILA

oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014  
160 x 180 cm



THAILAND (PREMONITION OF A HOLIDAY)

*oil, acrylic and spray paint on canvas, 2014*  
160 x 180 cm





BEEF

oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014  
200 x 180 cm





THE WINTER AFTER THE SUMMER OF LOVE

oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014  
160 x 180 cm



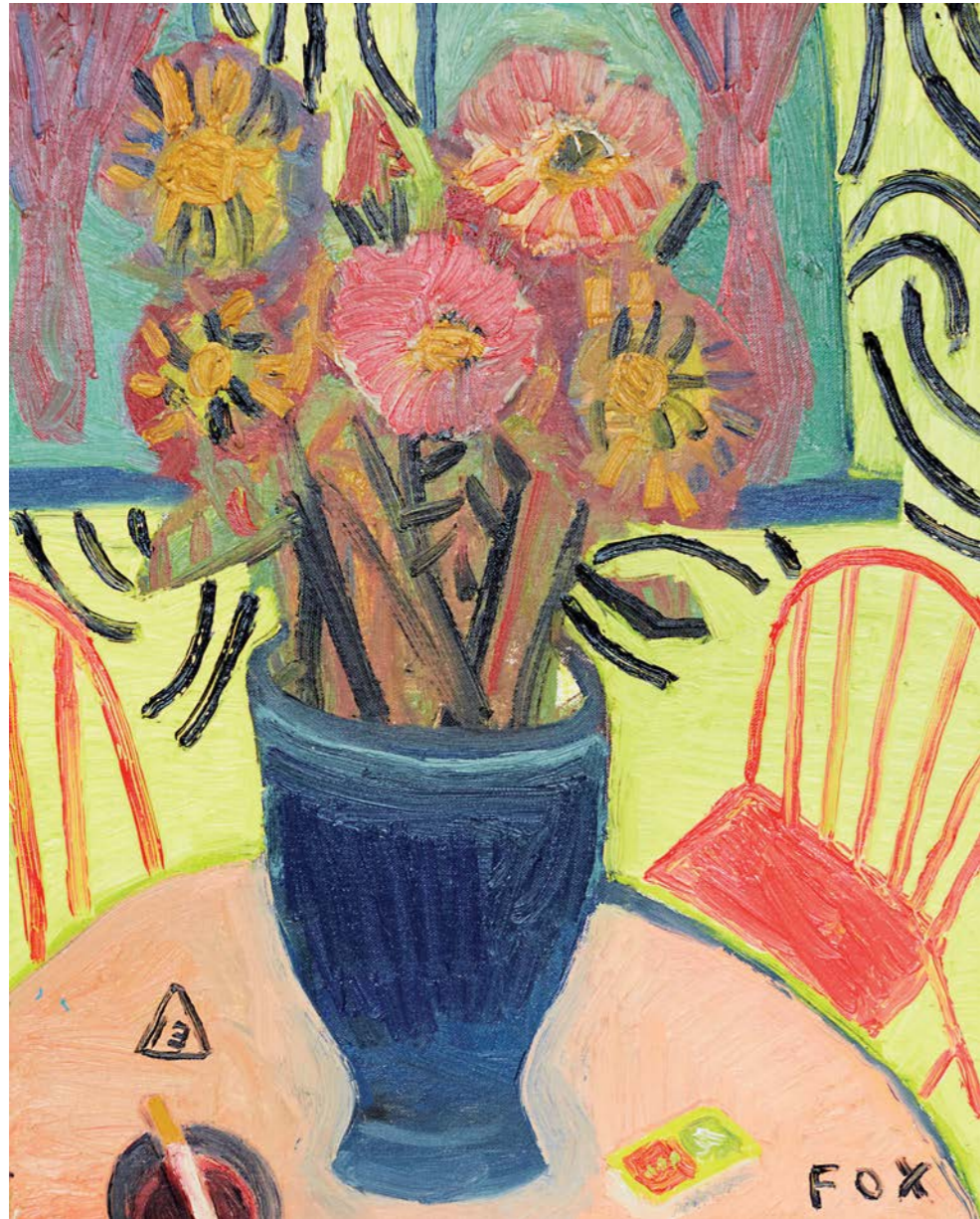


JUAN PONCE DE LEON IN SEARCH OF THE FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014*  
160 x 140 cm







CODEINE JACUZZI SHARK

*oil on canvas, 2013*  
50 x 40 cm



CO-CODAMOL LOWLAND PONY

*oil on canvas, 2013*  
50 x 40 cm



ENGLISH HOLIDAY

acrylic on canvas  
200 x 180 cm





UNTITLED

oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014  
180 x 160 cm





PARIS

oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014  
200 x 180 cm





THE WHITE HORSE  
*acrylic on canvas, 2014*  
160 x 180 cm





YOU DON'T SEE DOVES AT BBQ'S

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014*  
160 x 180 cm





FUCK THIS TOWN

*oil on canvas, 2014*  
160 x 140 cm







HOTEL

acrylic on canvas, 2014  
100 x 120 cm

SAHARAN

acrylic on canvas, 2015  
155 x 155 cm







LEONARD

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014*  
160 x 180 cm





IT WAS THE DRINK TALKING (BULL IN A CHINA SHOP)

*oil and acrylic on canvas, 2014*  
160 x 180 cm



LOW RISK NEIGHBORHOOD

acrylic on canvas, 2015  
155 x 155 cm



HOTDOG CANNIBALS

acrylic on canvas, 2013  
160 x 180 cm





NATASHAS FLOWERS

*acrylic on canvas, 2013*  
160 x 180 cm



## DANNY FOX

### Solo Shows

As He Bowed His Head To Drink – The Redfern Gallery, London 2015  
White Horses – C n B Gallery, London 2014  
Bloom – Plumblin Gallery, St. Ives 2013

### Selected Group Shows

Top Guns – Paul Loya Gallery L.A 2014  
30 years of the future – Castlefield Gallery, Manchester 2014  
You Can't Put Your Arms Around A Memory – Faux Pas Gallery, Moscow 2014  
Brutales Matanzas! – Maison 1575 – Paris 2014  
Deserts Of Humanity – Display Gallery, London 2013  
Young British Alcoholics – Eternal Youth, London 2012  
Winter Show – Millennium Gallery, St. Ives 2011

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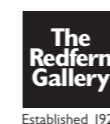
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