

SIMON CASSON

“Smeech and Hrain”

LONG AND RYLE

PRIVATE VIEW WEDNESDAY 10RD OCTOBER 6-8
EXHIBITION DATES 11 OCTOBER – 3 NOVEMBER 2012
GALLERY OPENING TIMES TUESDAY – FRIDAY 10-5:30, SATURDAY 11-2



Long and Ryle gallery will be exhibiting a new series of paintings by Simon Casson, whose work has been inspired by the extraordinary setting at Ford Abbey where Casson is an artist in residence. Ford Abbey is one of the most spectacular examples of historic architecture in England, and a former Cistercian monastery. Casson, who studied at the Royal Academy (1994-1995), plays with historical references using his great virtuosity as a painter to create a series of monumental works that encapsulate centuries of painting, slashing figures with streams of abstraction.

“Smeech and Hrain”, the title of the exhibition uses the atmospheric sensation of the words translating in old Somerset dialect as ‘smoke and rain’. Popular culture is presently abound with the re-visiting of the dark, Gothic, bedtime fairytale, settling down alongside the vampiric clan of teenage-friendly tomes of late. In this aesthetical environment Casson has cast aside as history, his fascination with the Classical World, to warmly embrace the Somerset dialect and folklore which circle his rural home and studio.

The apple orchard or “artchet”, with it’s lines of stumpy horror-movie trees, hanging heavy with the last diminutive apples of the year, lies cloaked with damp smoldering smeech. Old spent leaves are burnt to signal the end of the season, but never the apple wood itself as this would insight anger in the preternatural predators amongst the cider barrels. The West Country is a county brimming with myth and legend, much of it concerning agriculture and fertility. Superstition reigns supreme, as fairy

rings or “gallitraps” trace the earth beneath the boughs bearing fruit. Legend tells of other-worldly creatures with their lilliputian fingers troubling country lives, over the multi-layered phantasmal threshold of reality beyond the dimmet or twilight.

Fantastical landscape, combining the English pastoral scene with an almost theatrical metaphysical back drop, lies behind the constructed situation of figure and still life. The paintings are each entitled with words torn from the old Somerset dialect, centuries in use, to lay shafts of light onto the players behind the staged scenes. Pale pultrilitious lasses, blanketed in blossoms, surrounded by multi-layered drapery, stare out from the canvas, their identity obscured by paint smirches, smeared with fingers and brushes, allowing them to represent the ideal female, their full chronicles withheld. The pheasant and the deer emerge from the hedgerow, to engage with the viewer in the transcendental play, with paint itself playing a pivotal role - as talismanic as the charismatic dialect, the characters and the landscape.

The exhibition will be held at Long & Ryle Gallery in London, for the month of October through to November, and will deliver the country ways to the city.



In this new work, the focus of Simon Casson's potent contemporary classicism has been turned on rural Somerset, to very good effect. Ravishingly lyrical mysteries populate the fields and woods of sylvan England, in supremely painterly images from myth and legend. The expected is hidden, the unexpected revealed. All is open to interpretation. Andrew Lambirth - April 2012

For further information or images please contact either Sarah Long or Ruth Knox

LONG & RYLE, ,4 JOHN ISLIP STREET LONDON, SW1P 4PX
Tel 020 7834 1434 / Fax 020 7821 9409
www.longandryle.com / gallery@long-and-ryle.com