

Tom de Freston

FROM DARKNESS

4 March - 18 June 2022

No 20
Arts



Rupture (2021),
Oil on canvas, 200 x 125 cm



Wreckage I (2021),
Oil on canvas, 200 x 125 cm



Cave (2021),
Oil on canvas, 200 x 125 cm

No 20 Arts
20 Cross Street
London N1 2BG

No 20 Arts is delighted to present *FROM DARKNESS*, a solo exhibition of new works by Tom de Freston. Coinciding with the publication of his book, *Wreck* (Granta), this exhibition presents paintings and sculptures which explore themes of horror and suffering, alongside beauty and melancholy.

In his artist statement, Tom de Freston writes: “For the past four years, I have been collaborating with the Syrian writer Professor Ali Souleman and documentary film-maker Mark Jones. Ali lost his sight to a bomb blast in Syria in 1997 and we were attempting to translate his experiences of war and displacement into a collection of paintings. To make the unseen seen. Then, a month before the first lockdown, a fire gutted my studio, destroying twelve years’ worth of work in a matter of hours. Amongst the burnt debris, I had a moment of instinct: this would not be an end, but a new beginning.

The paintings in *FROM DARKNESS* are the result of an entirely new approach. Ash and debris have been mixed into paint, embedded into resin-covered surfaces. Works are imprinted with hands and feet, outlined absences which speak of a past presence. Grids are laid down, stencilled, sprayed to form cumulative spaces and suggestions of architectural interiors. Power washers have been taken to the surface, revealing hidden passages of paint. It’s an approach to mark-making akin to exploration, to looking to map new terrains.

They are paintings which invite us to enter them, to step inside the canvas, or at the least to occupy the gap between. As such they are invitations into psychological hinterlands, awaiting your arrival.”

About *Wreck*

Tom de Freston has long had an obsession with Gericault's painting *The Raft of the Medusa* (1819), and the troubling story behind its creation. *Wreck* explores the resonance between de Freston's collaboration with Professor Ali Souleman and that of Gericault's work on his masterpiece. Connecting the past masterpiece, and de Freston's contemporary artistic approach, the book is a deeply personal exploration of the transformation of fear and suffering into art. *Wreck* will be published by Granta on 3rd March 2022 and is available for preorder now at no20arts.com.

About Tom de Freston

Tom de Freston is dedicated to the construction of multimedia worlds, combining paintings, film and performance into immersive visceral narratives. His work is exhibited widely. He has held various residencies and fellowships, including the inaugural Creative Fellowship at Birmingham University, the Levy Plumb Artist in Residence at Cambridge University, and a Leverhulme Artistic Residency. He is currently Artistic Director of Medicine Unboxed. *Julia*



and the Shark, his collaboration with his wife, the novelist Kiran Millwood Hargrave, was shortlisted for Waterstones Book of the Year. His debut narrative non-fiction book, *Wreck* is published by Granta in March 2022. Previous publications include graphic novels with Bloomsbury and Gatehouse Press.



Mirror 1 (side 1) (2020), Mixed media in bespoke birchwood ply box, double sided, 120 x 120 cm



Gravity (2021), Mixed media on paper, 76 x 55.7 cm

About No 20 Arts

Opened in January 2017, No 20 Arts is a centre for contemporary arts. A multi-functional space, the gallery hosts a programme of exhibitions, performances and events that support emerging and established artists working across all media.

For more information and prices, please contact info@no20arts.com

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