



Tom Down
A Far Sunset

Ben Hargrave In conversation with Tom Down.

BH: Previous works have included dramatic, sinking galleons, peaks of mountains, spaceships and castles. The themes that connect the elements of this show, and your previous work, appear to be very much based on conquest - of land, sea, and even space.

TD: Conquest has been a concurrent feature running through my work, in both a physical and metaphoric sense. The objects used on one hand are a very real, sometimes imposing force within the space. But also each element is utilised as a symbol of a certain lost spirit of those romantic notions.

BH: Is it like our antidote to the very unglamorous global conquests we see at present then? Although this may seem like an obvious connection if looked at in a certain way it seems like an inescapable one.

TD: There's no denying the political connections within my work, though I hope they deal with broad themes rather than specific events.

BH: I think there's something quite nationalistic about it in that sense too.

TD: There's a certain nationalistic aspect running through my work, especially with the uniforms and flags. These elements are all associated with aspects of Imperialism and military conquest. Though they also relate to other genres outside of those.

BH: It feels like it is an exhibition striving for the currently unattainable ideal of winning without loss. Are you presenting us with the glory without the struggle?

TD: I'd say it's caused by an aspirational and somewhat naive impulse. There's a definite striving to re-capture somewhat utopian ideals, but with the acceptance that it's never going to be the same. I think the work revels in this dichotomy, that of a glorious failure.

BH: Is it then the intention that these symbols of power (Heraldry, illustration etc) are designed to be a doorway to the stories that lead to them? Or, are they a button to press our guilt - so obviously showing us that we can't achieve?

TD: Yes, I suppose doorways would be a good analogy. They're in place to lead the viewer towards the ideals embodied. I'm not trying to make people feel guilty, I'm just putting my ideas out there.

BH: It feels like you, as the artist, are sort of trying to trick yourself into thinking that there still might be a possibility of getting to that unattainable goal. It's a self-inflicted, almost slapstick deception given that it's being practised upon yourself?

TD: Yes, there is a somewhat pathetic tinge to it. But it's ultimately that striving that sustains the work.

BH: I think that there is a definite feeling of striving that comes through in the process and that suggests itself in the final works too. I suppose this relates itself to the original idea of conquest and the striving to achieve it. The only inconsistency is that the goal is always the idea of conquest but never attempts to embody the reality of it.



Computer generated impression of 'A Far Sunset'



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Biography

Tom Down was born in Solihull in 1987; he graduated from Wimbledon College of Art in 2008 with a BA (Hons) in Fine Art: Painting, and now lives and works in Birmingham.

Recent exhibitions include; Plain at Rhys and Hannah present, Bristol; Departures at White Nave Gallery, Dover; & Retreat at Terrace, London.

Upcoming Exhibitions:

Anthony Peskine
Who Do You Think You Are?
30/4 - 17/5
Private View: 28/4, 6-8pm

Tether
Murder in The Kremlin
29/5 - 14/6
Private View: 29/5, 6-8pm

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