

BILLY CHILDISH

man in the mouth of a cave

26th May – 25th August 2019

Preview: Saturday 25th May, 4-8pm

Carl Freedman Gallery opens in Margate, Kent on Saturday 25th May with a major solo show of new work by British painter Billy Childish.

After purchasing part of the old Thanet Press building in the centre of town, Carl Freedman's new HQ spans 10,000 square foot of a concrete 1960s commercial building. The site includes three exhibition spaces, an artist apartment and an upper floor dedicated to Freedman's print publishing business Counter Editions.

'This is a fantastic opportunity for us to present larger-scale solo presentations by our artists as well as more expansive curated shows. Margate is going through an amazing transformation, led by a growing art community, and we are excited to be a part of the future of the town's creative-led regeneration' – Carl Freedman.

The inaugural exhibition *man in the mouth of a cave* by Billy Childish introduces new themes in the artist's oeuvre of swimming and wild uninhibited nature. Free of irony or superficial novelty, these paintings espouse values of authenticity, spirituality, and beauty, conveying a sense of a vivid physical presence. Above all, they express Childish's earnest engagement with life.

Waterfalls, the sea, caves, trees, nudes and the artist himself are recurring motifs. In some works the mouths of caves suggest the religious motif of the empty tomb, in others a dark, Styx-like river. Present throughout is a quality of quiet melancholy combined with a vibrating, somewhat hallucinatory energy, rendered through Childish's roiling brushwork.

Childish's canvases clearly bear the marks of the art-historical lineage of which Childish feels himself a part. Interlocking patterns and forms cluster, coalesce, and dissipate, working as vehicles for Childish's Munch-like preoccupation with colour. Staccato brushstrokes are contained by more flowing, sinuous lines, recalling the visionary intensity of German Expressionism. Embedded in a tradition stretching back into the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, Childish's work is still – as ever – insistently and idiosyncratically his own. As Childish states: 'You could say that these paintings are ultra-postmodernist; they've absorbed everything, and then decided what's of value. Each one is an exultation of being a painting.'

Unconcerned with any narrative of progress within his practice each painting – whether a depiction of his nude body or a birch tree – is, for Childish, a form of self-portraiture. In his own words: 'As I work fluidly from painting to painting, theme to theme, so the cycles develop organically and explain themselves without my prescription. In essence I am painting one painting that is ever-changing as if of its own volition – the painting of myself.'

Billy Childish is a prolific painter, author, poet, publisher, and musician. Born in 1959 in Chatham, Kent. He has extensively exhibited and performed internationally.

Exhibitions include: *heaven's journey*, Neugerriemschneider, Berlin (2018); *man with jackdaw*, Villa Schöningen, Berlin (2017); *mountain view house*, Goss Michael Foundation, Dallas (2017); *Billy Childish: incomprehensible but certainly*, Opelvillen, Rüsselsheim, Germany (2016); *Billy Childish in Print (A Survey)*, Rochester Art Gallery, Kent (2016); *the house at grass valley*, Carl Freedman Gallery, London (2016); *flowers, nudes and birch trees*, Lehmann Maupin, New York (2015); *Billy Childish. Frozen estuary and Other Paintings of the Divine Ordinary*, The Historic Dockyard, Chatham, Kent; *Billy Childish: Unknowable but Certain*, ICA, London (2010). The artist lives and works in Kent, England.

Editors' Notes:

Carl Freedman Gallery was founded in April 2003 by curator Carl Freedman. Carl Freedman Gallery established itself with a critical and curatorially driven programme. The gallery represents emerging British and international artists including Katherine Bernhardt, Ivan Seal, Edith Dekyndt, Pieter Vermeersch, Tori Wranes, Ann Cathrin November Hoibo and Thilo Heinzmann. In Spring 2019 Carl Freedman Gallery opens its new Margate gallery HQ – with 4-5 exhibitions a year.

Counter Editions was founded in 2000 and commissions and produces prints and multiples by leading international contemporary artists, including Tracey Emin, John Baldessari, Jonas Wood, Howard Hodgkin, Rachel Whiteread, David Shrigley, Martin Creed and many others. Counter Editions has become the UK's leading website for buying contemporary art. Working with over 50 leading artists – including five Turner Prize winners – Counter Editions has collaborated with major institutions such as the Serpentine Gallery and Hayward Gallery in London and the New Museum in New York. In 2012 Counter Editions produced the official limited-edition prints for the London Olympic and Paralympic Games, and since published the official Winter Olympic Games print. Editions have been purchased by numerous international collections including the Museum of Modern Art, New York, Kunstmuseum Zurich, the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the British Council.

Instagram: @carlfreedmangallery @countereditions

Listings information:

Address: 28 Union Crescent / Margate / CT9 1NS

Open: Thursday - Sunday 11am-6pm (and by appointment at other times)

Nearest Station: Margate station (Trains from London Kings Cross take approximately 1hr 30 mins, London Victoria approximately 1hr 50mins)