

James Metsoja

It's Only Still Life

2 to 21 October 2012

Opening View: 1 October 6 to 9pm

Open to public admission free

12 noon to 6pm daily

OUTPOST is excited to present *It's Only Still Life*, comprising new works by Norwich based artist James Metsoja.

What is striking when one first enters the studio of Metsoja is how very rich it is in visual impressions; the floor covered in splodges, trollies and tables overflowing with paint tubes, tissues, brushes, images scattered, canvases leaning against walls and chairs, a few brightly coloured curious figures punctuating the space. This space is a unified chaos; one that appears to be subject to continuous activity, possibly corresponding with an internal state of turmoil and contradictions. It is laden in the residue of the processes Metsoja undergoes and from which his works emerge like creatures from a dense forest.

In *It's Only Still Life* painted portraits intermingle with renditions of small figures or toys, which are both recurring subject matter in Metsoja's work. The brushstrokes are often generous and full of energy; giving the impression that they have been applied quickly, out of urgency, from a temporary state of clarity that could vanish at any moment.

In one canvas a man standing in front of a yellow background made up of a repeat pattern of diamond shapes appears as though lost in thought, his gaze hovering somewhere mid-air. Wrapped up in a scarf, his cheek blushing or swept by the wind, his hand awkwardly reaching for a pocket. There is something vulnerable about him, frozen in a moment of private reflection. Each work encapsulates a given state of being, a fundamental quality, giving us not just an extraneous image but simultaneously acting as a mirror.

Metsoja's position as an artist appears to reside in his obsession with paintings and the act of painting itself. Observation thus becomes crucial; seeing, finding, searching for that something that makes a painting supreme. Metsoja's work makes art historical references, both through utilising existing paintings as starting points and creating images that employ a painterly language, contributing to a wider dialogue between painters, past and present.

The sheer volume of Metsoja's work, both in terms of time and output, points toward a process that is very alive, almost biological by nature. In his own words, "working with painting creates peace but at the same time perpetuates the chaos". Metsoja's search is relentless and unwavering. To the artist, *It's Only Still Life* may be a point of resolve to some degree, but no doubt a short lived one. The daily battle between chaos and clarity, material and image goes on. For Metsoja nothing ever stands still, always moving... Shedding skin.

James Metsoja lives and works in Norwich. Metsoja graduated from Norwich School of Art and Design with a BA (Hons) Fine Art in 2007. Previous group exhibitions include *O Painters! My Painters*, Waterfront Gallery, Ipswich and Art Exchange, Colchester (2011), *November Pavilions*, Eastern Pavilions, Norwich (2011), *Point of Address*, OUTPOST Members Show selected by Peter Suchin (2010). Future shows include *Marmite Prize for Painting* (2012)

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