

Michael Simpson

*Drawing towards Painting: Selected Works 1974-2024*

24 January – 8 March 2025

Bury Street, SW1

Modern Art is pleased to present *Drawing towards Painting: Selected Drawings 1974-2024*, Michael Simpson's second solo exhibition with the gallery. Widely renowned for his paintings, this exhibition examines the breadth of his drawing practice. Drawing is a daily practice for Simpson, commonly he'll close out the day drawing. With materials such as carbon pencil, French chalk, Indian ink, gouache and oil paint, he draws on surfaces close to hand, from restaurant napkins, discarded cardboard, end papers to book covers – such choices make clear the instinctive drive of this aspect of his practice. Each differs significantly, encompassing examples rendered with economy and speed to more graphic drawings, akin to architectural plans. Like his paintings, his drawings depict a small selection of repeated forms, especially confessionals, benches, ladders and leper squints.

For this exhibition, Simpson has selected drawings from a much larger archive and ongoing body of work. Notable throughout his drawing practice is the use of cursive handwriting, as well as annotation and personal notes that make clear his thought process when constructing an image. As David Risley notes in the exhibition book, Simpson's drawings are "working drawings, thinking with the hand: problem solving, notes to self, visual reminders - purely functional". The drawings are emphatically material things, made of physical matter. Past painting series such as the *Burning of the books* are present as spectral remainders of the resulting paintings that were destroyed, giving these drawings greater potency while forming an archive of sorts. Like his paintings, his drawings have the same concern for problem solving, rendering the same form in variations, to refine and enhance, to get closer to the desired image he imagines in his mind. The drawings offer a gateway into how the paintings emerge, and more specifically the symbiotic relationship between his drawings and paintings. Possessing a similar power to his paintings – drawing plays a key part in his ongoing examination of the mechanics of painting.

Concurrently, an exhibition of Simpson's drawings is taking place at American Art Catalogues, New York (30 January – 14 March). To celebrate this, Modern Art and American Art Catalogues have co-published the book, *Michael Simpson: 101 Drawings; Selected Works 1974 - 2024* which features an essay by artist and writer David Risley.

Michael Simpson was born in Dorset in 1940 and lives and works in Wiltshire. Solo exhibitions include: Modern Art, London, (2024); Holburne Museum, Bath (2023); giant, Bournemouth (2022); Blain | Southern, London (2019); Minsheng Museum of Art, Shanghai (2018); Spike Island, Bristol (2016); David Roberts Arts Foundation, London (2014); Arnolfini Gallery, Bristol (1996 and 1983); and Serpentine Gallery, London (1985). He has participated in group exhibitions at Tara Downs, New York (2024); Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek (2021); Hayward Gallery, London (2019); Museum Moderner, Kunst, Stiftung, Ludwig, Wein, Vienna (2018); Limerick City Gallery of Art (2017); Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool; Contemporary Art Centre, Vilnius, Lithuania (both 2016); Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge (1999); and Serpentine Gallery, London (1987). In 2016, he was awarded the John Moores Painting Prize, having first been nominated for the prize in 1991. His works feature in prominent institutional collections including British Council, London; Roberts Institute of Art, London; Long Museum, Shanghai; Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebaek; Tate, London; and Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool.