



CHRISTIAN FURR

Williamson Art Gallery & Museum, Birkenhead

28 September - 24 November 2019

Cover image:
The Exuberant Fertility of the Universal Will 2015
Jouissance, State II
Oil on Linen.
(35x35 inches, 90x90cm)



Christian Furr receives an AoC Gold Award from Dame Julie Mellor DBE
- Wirral Metropolitan College at the House of Commons in 2004



Photo: Harley Moon Kemp

Every time I used to bunk off games to come here and have a look at the art in the Williamson, I never thought or dreamed that one day I would be having a show here. Looking at my own work over 30 years now, in this context, has given me the unique opportunity to assess it as a whole. As diverse as it is, certain themes reoccur because my interest in them never wanes.

My inspiration comes and has come from many places.
In the case of the Dairylea it was the supermarket, which was very convenient.

How do I know when a piece is finished? When it finally looks like I've painted it in a few seconds.

It's an amazing homecoming for me. Thank you.

www.christianfurr.com



Photo: Alison Bailey Smith

In 1995, aged 28, Christian Furr (born 1966) became the youngest artist to paint HM Queen Elizabeth II after being commissioned by Royal Overseas League. Furr's successive works have adorned the walls of the Saatchi Gallery, National Portrait Gallery, Royal Society of Portrait Painters and in the private collection at the Vatican. In 2004 Furr was awarded the Association of Colleges Award at the House of Commons in London, in connection with his time at Wirral Metropolitan College in Wallasey. It is given to further education alumni who have gone on to achieve excellence in their chosen field.

Highly sought after for his portrait commissions, the painter simultaneously follows the strong tradition of representation in British modern and contemporary art.

He is collected privately around the world, and features in the permanent collection of the Dorchester Collection's flagship art hotel '45 Park Lane' in London.

Furr is known as an innovative 'risk taker' in the art world as his art is eclectic. He works in different mediums and has been involved in acclaimed art collaborations such as his 'Staying Alive Neon' collection with Chris Bracey, his recent '45RPM' collection with

respected music photographer, Gered Mankowitz, and a first ever showing of the expressive 'Canival' collection with the Ivory Coast artist 'Aboudia'.

Last year Colt Technology Services commissioned an art piece from Furr for their headquarters in London. With thanks to the former, this is the first time it has been exhibited publicly, apart from a one night premiere at The Science Museum in London. The neon spectacles use a new nano 'super-black' material that the artist initiated with Imperial College scientists in response to Anish Kapoor's monopoly of Vantablack.

It is the first time that Furr's extensive oeuvre will be seen together in one place and in some instances the first time that particular works - including his new self-portrait - will have been seen publicly. The exhibition charts his early interests in learning from the figurative tradition and features examples of his more recent collaborations with other artists.

This exhibition has been produced as part of Wirral's year as Borough of Culture for the Liverpool City Region and is supported by the Culture and Visitor Economy team and Wirral Museums Service.

#christianfurrretrospective



#furlandscapes

Wirral Schoolyard 1986

Acrylic on Paper (30x23 inches, 76x59cm)

Kindly on loan from Angela Furr

An early work, painted at the age of eighteen, at Wirral Metropolitan College which was then based in Withens Lane. Students on foundation art were given a few days to paint the view from the college window which looked out to the Mersey skyline and had the school yard of Wirral Grammar in the foreground

'One always begins by imitating' – Eugene Delacroix

In 1989, the year Furr graduated from De Montfort University in Leicester, 'The Artists Studio' (9 x 6ft) was exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery annual portrait award. In 1992 he moved to London and rented a studio in a listed building in the old Jewish quarter at 41 New Road, Whitechapel.

When I need inspiration I go to a gallery and look at the pictures on the walls. In my Whitechapel studio I did a series of small paintings based on several different older paintings including a couple from the Walker Gallery which I had kept postcards of – American Ships in the Mersey and Molly Long Legs. I painted them quickly and they have really fluid spontaneous brushwork, as I pushed the paint around and tried to fit everything into a smaller canvas. I wanted them to look as if viewing the world through a souvenir snow globe. I was appropriating the past for my own purposes and used these great paintings as prototypes for my own inspiration.



Lilliput Velazquez 1991

Based on 'Equestrian portrait of Philip IV' by Velazquez (1635-1636) - Museo del Prado
Oil on Canvas (12x12 inches, 30x30cm)



Lilliput Stubbs 1991

Based on 'Molly Longlegs' by George Stubbs, 1762 - Walker Gallery
Oil on Canvas (12x12 inches, 30x30cm)



Lilliput Mersey 1991

Based on 'American Ships in the Mersey Off Liverpool' by Robert W Salmon (1775-1851) - Walker Gallery
Oil on Canvas (12x12 inches, 30x30cm)



Lilliput Gainsborough 1991

Based on Sir Benjamin Truman by Thomas Gainsborough (1770 - 1774) - Tate
Oil on Canvas (12x12 inches, 30x30cm)

#furnwhitechapel



Laughing Man 1990

Oil on hardboard
(6.5x6 inches, 16x15cm)



Acedia 1991

Oil on Canvas
(60x48 inches, 152.4x121.9cm)
Kindly on loan from Marina O'Loughlin

Bacchanalia 1990

Oil on hardboard
(6.5x6 inches, 16x15cm)



I had painted the Lilliput series and some small informal 'tronie' studies of friends laughing and partying and I wanted to do something on a grander scale.

I got an artist friend of mine to pose and I looked to the past for inspiration. For 'Acedia' I borrowed the pose from the portrait 'Don Juan de Austria' c. 1632, by Velazquez – a painting of a favourite court jester to King Philip IV – however his direct stare has the feeling of another Velazquez portrait, of a jester 'Portrait of Sebastián de Morra' c.1644.

I wanted to use the power of red in this painting to make a statement. It signifies desire/anger here.

The depiction of the background and the lighting is deliberately theatrical. I used an old redhead lamp to light the subject. I was interested in the idea of playing with reality and artifice, reality and fantasy. The jester's staff in the original becomes a brush. Subliminally I think this painting could have been saying something about my state of mind at the time and the role of the artist in society. I was doing menial jobs to support my painting work, so the brush could be a reference to both painting and making a living.

'The dignity of labour' was a phrase that was in my head when I was working on it.

This painting indirectly led to Furr being commissioned by the Queen when it was chosen for an open exhibition at the Royal Overseas League (one of the judges was the art critic Andrew Graham Dixon).

A pigeon appears in the lower right of the painting. One of many birds that appear in Furr's work.

The word 'Acedia' has its own meaning and could refer to the aspects of choosing art as a life path, it is also similar to the word 'Arcadia' which refers to the Idyllic'.

There's a Place 1993

Oil on canvas (48x48 inches, 121.9x121.9cm)

The title is taken from the Beatles' song and the Bernstein/Sondheim song from West Side Story.

When Furr began his degree in Fine Art at De Montfort University in Leicester, he found inspiration for his work at the college library. A habit seemingly formed at Wirral Metropolitan College. His foundation report had the name heading as "Chris (I think he's in the library) Furr".

Joe McGillivray, his tutor, had written this at the top because whenever he asked his fellow foundation students where Furr was, that was their response.

At the Kimberlin Library at De Montfort University, I discovered a huge archive of film stills from kitchen sink dramas of the 60s. 'Look Back In Anger' with Richard Burton and Clare Bloom included an image of them in a confined space with the female protagonist at an ironing board. I started watching all these black and white films and discovered things like 'A Kind of Loving' with Alan Bates and the quirky writing of Shelagh Delaney and 'A Taste of Honey'. At college, I started doing etchings based on these film stills that also included lines from the films.

I painted 'There's a Place' when I had moved to a studio flat in Crouch End with my girlfriend, now wife, Emma. It was basic living. The sofa was also a Z-bed. I asked the couple upstairs who were friends to pose in our flat, and I transposed the kitchen sink aesthetic from the 60s to the 90s. I included the light switch on the wall as a reference to electricity/unseen energy. The squaring up lines are still visible and if you look closely at the space on the wall in the middle of the canvas, you will see what look like scribbles. I could lie and say it was me paying homage to Cy Twombly, but it in actuality it is just where I had been wiping out my brushes on the canvas. I kept these marks slightly visible because I liked them. It reminds you of the process and that this is just paint.

It was one of the first of Furr's paintings of men and women in a situation. It has an element of humour in that it plays with the idea of traditional roles. An early depiction of the 'theatre of relationships' set against a realist backdrop, in this case the realism of a domestic environment.

Ingrid expresses her Horror 1988

Drypoint Etching on German Etching Paper (16.5x11.5 inches, 42x29cm)



#furrkitchensink



Ingrid expresses her horror at the sight and magnitude of the who returns from the which she feels is not the right sort of publication for him to have.



To escape from the depression I've experienced at home. I've written a pub song and after drinking heavily takes the microphone to sing.

It's the Talk of the Town 1988

Drypoint Etching on German Etching Paper (16.5x11.5 inches, 42x29cm)



HM Queen Elizabeth II 1995

Inkjet on 310gsm Hahnemuhle
German Etching Paper
Framed , glazed in museum glass
Artist Proof 2010 - Edition of Ten
(26.3x20 inches, 66.9x50.8 cm)



At the age of twenty-eight, Furr was chosen and became the youngest artist to officially paint Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The Royal Overseas League is a Commonwealth organisation in St James, London (where the painting now hangs and is free to view). It held annual open exhibitions for artists. In 1992, he exhibited his painting 'Acedia' there. Through exhibiting, he was commissioned to paint a portrait of one of the Leagues ex-chairmen.

A couple of years later, I got a call out of the blue from the director of the League. I thought it was bit unusual because I wasn't expecting his call. "Are you sitting down?" he asked.

"I am now," I replied.

"The Queen would like you to paint her portrait," he said. I remember the words well.

At the age of twenty-eight, the Queen had personally chosen his work from a shortlist of artists. It was like the realisation of a fantastical dream. He had always admired the royal portraits of artists like Velazquez and Van Dyck. He had been given the opportunity of a lifetime.

I remember I drove to the Buckingham Palace in my red Beetle with my paint brushes. The guards laughed at me when I arrived. Before the commission, I looked at all the portraits that had been done before and found them all to be very far away from their subject. So I decided to go closer with my composition. I had a choice of what the Queen was to wear. I met her dresser and chose the robes of the Star and Garter. I wanted to paint her as a figurehead, depicting her with a human side, with the national colours of red white and blue. When the Queen came in she was carrying a blanket and put it on the side of her chair. I included it in the portrait because I felt it showed an element of vulnerability. With my portraits I seek the soul, the essential, the feelings of somebody. I found the Queen to be lively, witty and accommodating during our sittings. I had two, two-hour sittings with Her Majesty in the Yellow Drawing Room. Then, I finished the work in my studio in about a month.

Between 1995 and 2003, after the portrait of the Queen, Furr was commissioned to paint several academic portraits. He married Emma in 1996 and started a family. In 1999, he had a second portrait 'Ed and Linda' exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery, BP Portrait Award exhibition in London.

In between the commissions I wanted to try and paint my own family and my wife. I have included a few personal paintings of my family. I have three daughters; Colette, Daphne and Anika.

In 2003 with 'Mirrors', I returned to one of my previous themes which combined the personal with ideas.



Girl with Light 2001

Oil on Canvas hand finished giclee
(From the original canvas
measuring 107 x 107cm)
(19.6x19.6 inches, 50x50cm)
Artist's collection



Colette and Daphne - The Artist's Daughters 2002

Oil on Canvas (30x24 inches, 76.2x 60.9cm)

Artists collection



Anika - The Artist's Daughter 2009

Oil on Canvas (16x12 inches, 40.6x30.4cm)

Artists collection



Mirrors 2003

Oil on Linen (48x48 inches, 121.9x121.9cm)

The catalyst for the idea of men and women in a space with a non-obvious narrative started with 'There's a Place 1993' and then ten years later in 2003 he painted 'Mirrors' which is a self-portrait of Furr and his wife Emma with a similar realist aesthetic.

The first time I used friends as the subject, but the next time it was Emma and I, so it is an honest choice of subject matter. It is an existential painting about observed and observing people in a situation. I sometimes change the titles of my paintings and this one had a few including; 'The Music Lovers' and 'Sliding Doors', before I eventually settled on 'Mirrors'. The mirror image is subtly different from a true reflection. I like using mirrors in paintings to depict alternate realities and as our new wardrobe had a sliding door with mirrors, I took advantage of this.

Painted at the time when the family had moved into a new home with their young daughters, it is an unidealised work reminiscent of the 'situationism' of Sartre and has elements of the 'kitchen sink' work. Apparent are floorboards and some underlay on the lower right of the canvas.

The painting was first inspired by the song 'Underwear' by Pulp. Emma and Christian had seen the band perform the song at the Brixton Academy in 2001. Contextually, it was the dawn of the 'reality show' phase of television, with voyeuristic shows such as 'Big Brother', a concept born out of the 1971 sociological 'Stanford Prison Experiment'. The stripped bare element of these reality shows is reflected in the everyday depiction of a couple in their new suburban home. There is honesty but a certain uncomfortable confrontational element in the direct stare, out of the canvas, of the seated male and standing female in the mirror. The golden glow of the colour palette somehow acts as a counterpoint to the frankness of the subject matter.



Flesh and Blood 2011

Oil on Linen
(36x36 inches, 91.4x91.4cm)

#furrenandwomen

In 2006, aged 40 years, Furr's figurative realist paintings developed into a series depicting men and women in the neutral settings of hotel rooms with their associations of anonymity and transience. They use models as subjects in depersonalised spaces to illustrate sub-conscious/conscious ideas. They sometimes have a cinematic reference. The first painting in this series was 'Red and Black' in 2006 and culminated with this final work 'Flesh and Blood' in 2011. The work uses the colour red again in the depiction of the velvet fabric carried by the figure on the right.

The standing women avoid the viewers gaze and represent different aspects of character: the poses depict empowerment and vulnerability respectively. The usual reclining masculine presence is now reduced to stone in the dying wounded lion featured in a painting on the wall.

I had researched my name 'Furr' and found it originated from Lucerne, Switzerland in the 1700s. Lucerne's most famous aspect is its sculpture carved out of one piece of rock - the wounded 'Lion of Lucerne' which Mark Twain described as the most moving piece of stone in history. If you look closely, you will see the lion's paw comes slightly out of the edge of the picture. I like playful 'trompe l'œil' elements like this.

Love Forever 2009

Inkjet on Archival Paper
Artists Proof (41x41 inches, 105x105cm)



#furrenandwomen

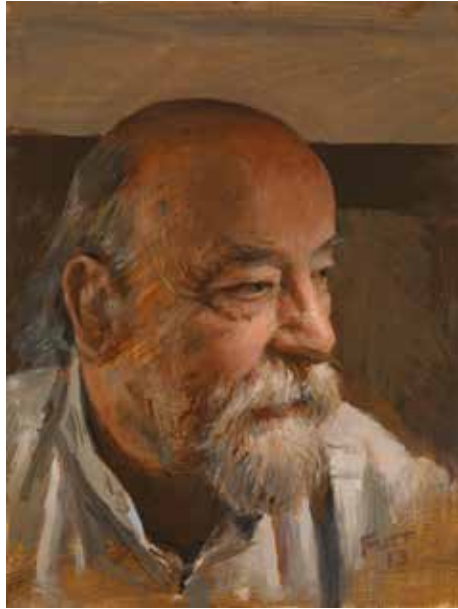
Balance of Nature 2010

Gloss paint on Circular Canvas
(47.2 inches, 1.2m diameter)



It was a moment of madness. I was working in the film VFX industry. I was sitting at my computer frustrated and hungover. I had a picture of a Macbeth colour chart open in Photoshop. For the hell of it, I went into Filters and chose 'Twirl!'. I thought the instant result was great. Whether you are a musician or an artist, sometimes good things can come from boredom and frustration, or when you're simply doodling or daydreaming. I like things like this.

It was a throwaway moment I wanted to immortalize. I originally wanted to make this painting so that it continually turned clockwise slowly on a motor. The dynamic energy and disorganization of life in a handy, colourful clean capsule. I thought it was like the birth of something - a life, or the inception of an idea. I have always loved pop art and the Sixties aesthetic. I was thinking of the cartoons I loved as a child too where complex ideas are illustrated in a simple and humorous way; The Beano, Tex Avery and Tom & Jerry are art. Sometimes an image can sum everything up and this did it for me at the time.



Roy Ackerman 2012

Oil on wooden panel (7x6 inches, 17.7x15.2cm)
Kindly on loan from Sally Ackerman

With portraits, I seek the soul of someone or something. The essential about somebody. The feeling of someone.

Roy Ackerman paid me an entirely unexpected studio visit in 2011 and was responsible for my works becoming part of the permanent collection at 45 Park Lane, Dorchester Collection in London. Roy, a great patron, became a great friend and I think portraits of friends have their own magic.

The Jokers 2014

Hand finished giclee on canvas (1 of 5)
(39.5x39.5 inches, 100x100cm)
(From the original canvas measuring 127x127cm)
Kindly on loan from Simon Carrell

In 2014, I had the idea of placing a couple not in a domestic setting or a neutral space but in a gallery surrounded by beautiful paintings all depicting different things. The opportunity to realise this vision occurred with a private commission. It is a very meta painting and contains many ideas and themes important to me throughout my life. Paintings are like portals.

Furr's childhood friend the author and illustrator Ged Adamson, who is also from Wirral, had drawn a cartoon of a pirate with several parrots on his shoulders and Furr decided to build this joke idea into a grand painting. The setting is the Wallace Gallery in London. As with the Lilliput paintings Furr turned again to appropriating the past.

The central painting on the wall is based on a Watteau that Furr has added a pirate to. The male figure smokes barefoot looking into the distance and the female lies seemingly oblivious to her surroundings reading a book.

The animals have different meanings. The parrots represent flights of fancy, poetry and striving for higher things; the cat, with a rat in its mouth, the conscious world of surviving day to day and dealing with bad things that happen; the shark on the bookcover represents the subconscious and things one can't control. It is also a nod to modern art and Damien Hirst's 1991 artwork of a shark in a tank, 'The Physical Impossibility of Death in the Mind of Someone Living'. The artist appears in a framed mirror in the top right, painting the scene. On the table there is red wine and playing cards. There is a joker on the table and one on the floor. The inscription on the frame on the wall reads VITA EST IOCUS, Latin for 'Life is a Joke'

On The Threshold 2013

Oil on Canvas (64x17 inches, 162.5x43.1cm)

I would come into the kitchen in the winter mornings and my silver tabby cat, 'Chunky', would be waiting outside the glass door in the darkness looking in at me, slightly malevolently, wanting to be let in and fed. It was an image I needed to paint. He was on the barrier between two worlds - interior and exterior and I liked this idea. I measured the window of the door and this became the exact dimensions of the canvas. The format also looked a bit like an obelisk too which I liked.

The unusual composition of this painting, part of a series called 'Animals', contains an element of surprise. The viewer may not notice the presence of the cat in the abstract blackness until it is revealed when the eye goes down to the bottom of the canvas. The title refers to the theosophical concept of the dweller on the threshold.







Noble Soul 2015

Jouisance, State III

Oil on Linen (35x35 inches, 90x90cm)



The Exuberant Fertility of the Universal Will 2015
 Jouissance, State II
 Oil on Linen (35x35 inches, 90x90cm)



**Sacred Love; More Sweet than the
 Expiring Morn-star's Paly Fires 2015**
 Jouissance, Yellow

Unique Hand finished acrylic paint, Ink jet and diamond dust on canvas
 Hand finished Edition 6 of 7 (45.75x47.5 inches, 116.2x120.65cm)

Jouissance

Always, at the back of your soul, there is something that says to you, "Mortal, drawn from eternal life for a short time, think how precious these moments are." - Eugène Delacroix.

The idea for the series originally came in 2009 when Furr saw a stock film of a computer generated explosion at a VFX company. After slowing it down and playing it backwards and forwards, he realised it would make a poetic image about time; immortalising in paint a visual effect (that didn't actually exist) of something ceasing to exist. The first painting in the series 'The Emanicipation of the Dissonance' was created in 2011.

After the original oil paintings, the hand finished coloured works are created. The oil paintings are scanned then altered digitally and coloured. The coloured images are then printed and, if they are canvases, painted over and diamond dust is applied on top. The title for the series 'Jouissance' is a French word meaning physical or intellectual pleasure, delight or ecstasy. The titles for the individual pieces come from Love poems.

'For my heart would explode with tenderness' is taken from a letter by Stuart Sutcliffe talking about his love for Astrid Kirchherr. 'I do love a girl but I will speak little of her for my mind would overflow with tenderness'. Furr misremembered what Stuart had actually written, but it became the title.

The explosion as a symbol or motif could be seen as the logical conclusion of artists fascination over the centuries with 'De Natura', 'Vanitas' and 'effect', it conjures up many possibilities: celestial sensation, spirit, destruction and blossoming.

My explosion series is about the brevity of life. It is my Vanitas motif. All the different colours have different feelings attached to them. The yellow one reminds me of sunshine. The blue one has a more mysterious or other worldly feeling. They are about formlessness and what lies beyond. For me, it has become my 'Vanitas' symbol and it is about me seeing life as a beautiful instant.



That My Heart Should Explode with Tenderness 2015
Jouissance, Rose Pink

Unique Hand finished acrylic paint, Ink jet and diamond dust on canvas
Hand finished Edition of 6 of 7 (45.75x47.5 inches, 116.2x120.65cm)



**I am a Sky Where Spirits Live. Stare into this Deepening
Blue, while the Breeze says a Secret**
Jouissance, Dust Blue

Ink jet and diamond dust on archival 315gsm paper
A/P (Edition of ten) (27.1x26.4 inches, 69x67cm)



A Presence More Beautiful than Venus or the Moon 2016
Jouissance, Purple

Ink jet and diamond dust on archival 315gsm paper
A/P Edition of ten (27.1x26.4 inches, 69x67cm)



Such Things to Be 2018
Jouissance, State IV

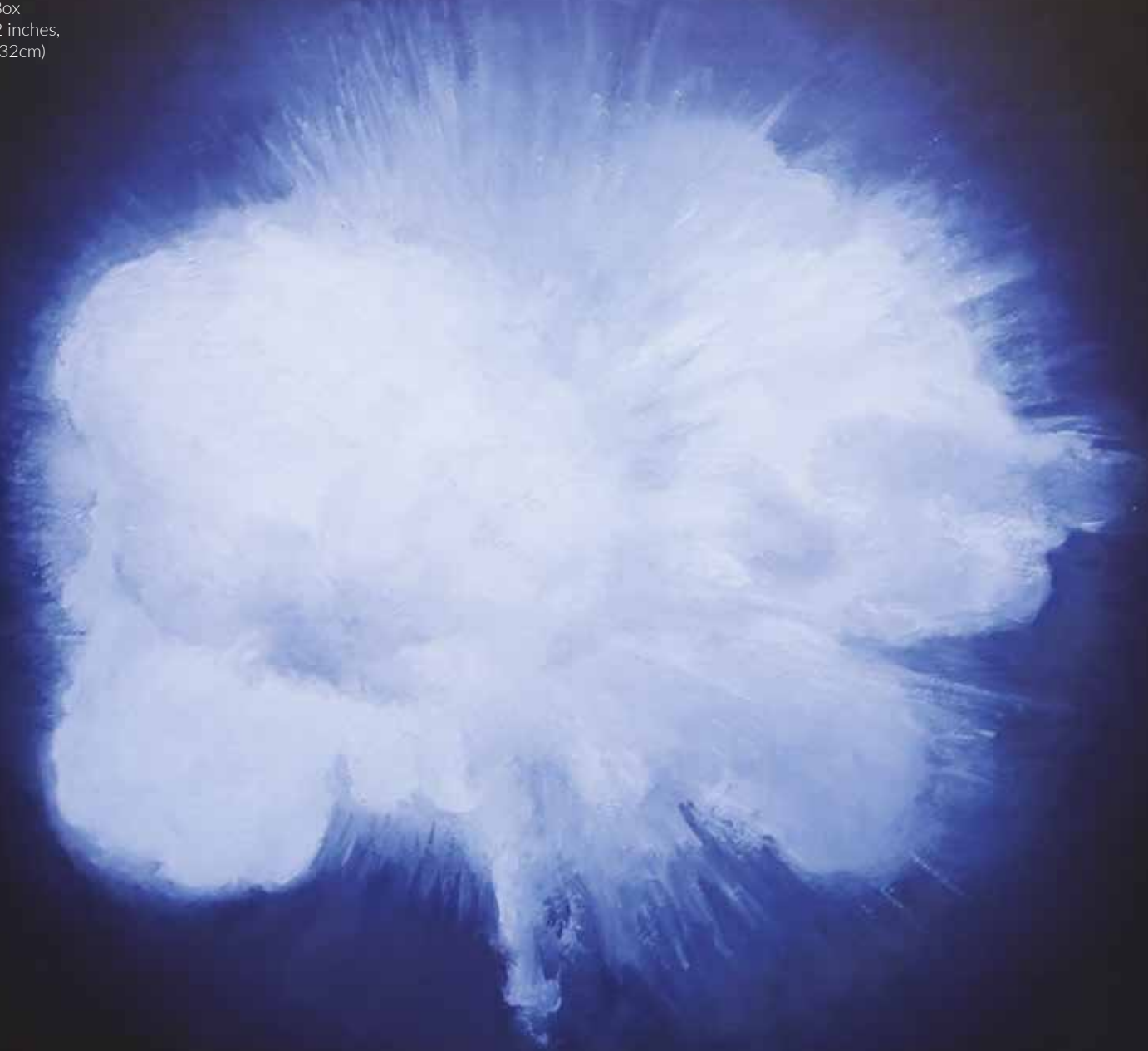
Oil on Linen (35x35 inches, 90x90cm)

**As Twilight to the Western Star
Thou Beloved art to Me 2017**

Jouissance, Arctic Blue

Light Box

(54x52 inches,
137x132cm)





Yellow Rose 2019

ChromaLuxe® print on aluminium 1 of 5
(from the original circular canvas of 2011 measuring 60cm)
(36.4x35.4 inches, 92.7x90 cm)



Blue Rose 2019

Oil on Linen] (31.4x31.4 inches, 80x80cm)

#furroses

And a Heaven in a Wild Flower
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand
- William Blake

The rose, the queen of flowers, has featured in many of my works and has been the inspiration for poets and painters for centuries. Roses can have so many meanings: for the Greeks, they were associated with Adonis and became a symbol of love that transcended even death and resurrection.

'Yellow Rose' is the first rose I painted and was inspired by J M W Turner as this rose is named the Fighting Temeraire after the painting in the National Gallery. I tried to incorporate the palette and the feeling of the 'Fighting Temeraire'

'Blue Rose' is based on a 'Moody Blue' rose and I wanted to imbue it with a sense of mystery.



**Self Portrait
with Two Circles 2019**

Oil on Circular Canvas
(38.5x38.5 inches, 98x98cm)

I first met the light artist Adam Barker-Mill when he and his wife Carolyn held a Christmas party. My wife Emma and I were invited. There were a lot of people there and at the end of the evening we wandered around the house and came across an artwork in one of the rooms which was a giant circle. I didn't know what it was or who it was by but I loved it. I later found out that it was one of Adam's artworks called 'Disco Volante' which means 'Flying Saucer' in Italian.

It was lit with changing coloured lights from the wall and it had a perfect head-sized hole in the middle. I couldn't resist sticking my head in the hole and when Emma and I were alone in the room we took pictures of each other pulling various faces with our head in the circle. After seeing them later I thought that, rather than leaving it as a throwaway image, it could be made permanent.

The title references Rembrandt's self-portrait with two circles which hangs at Kenwood House, London.

Acadian Red Fish 2019

Oil on Linen (24x17 inches, 60.9x43.1cm)

I have an area in my studio where I paint my still lifes so whatever lands in this space has my attention for a few hours and gets painted.

In this case, I was visiting a fishmonger in Shepherd's Bush and spotted this fish in the window. "What on earth is that" I asked? I was told it was a deep water fish from the North Atlantic. The fishmonger could see my open wonder and gave me the fish to paint.

I loved painting it - the natural vivid reds and its unearthly natural beauty.



#furstillives

Cheese

"Art is about the making special of some object" - Walter Burkert

It started when I saw a half bottle of milk that gone off on my window ledge in my Whitechapel studio in 1992 and decided to paint it. In 2010, it inspired my first cheese painting. The Irish cheese 'Finn'.

"Cheese is milk's leap toward immortality" - Clifton Fadiman.

I can lose myself when painting cheese. It's a world of contrasts.



Beemster 2016

Oil on gessoed panel (22.8x14.5 inches, 58x37cm)

Cheese as an object of beauty in itself has recently been rediscovered by Christian Furr, famous for being the youngest artist ever to paint the Queen. The two subjects couldn't be more different, but he sees them as equally valid.

Primarily drawn to their visual qualities, he tells BBC Culture there is also an "element of craft that I like to celebrate". He has painted everything from a solid Beemster to a gently oozing Petit Langres, against plain backgrounds carefully chosen to compliment the rich range of textures and tones of the cheeses. Intriguingly he has also found inspiration in mass produced cheeses such as Dairylea. "They have this humour about them that I really like", he explains. In these, other meanings can inadvertently creep in. He recalls placing a Babybel decorated with a Union Jack in the middle of his studio. "It was just after Brexit and it looked quite lonely".

He has said that he wants his cheese paintings to express the full range of human emotions and also believes that you can tell a lot about someone from their taste in cheese. Sarah Lucas's is apparently Cheddar. "And when you look at her work, it's in keeping". Furr's own favourite cheese is mature Gouda, which as an heir to the Dutch masters, seems quite apt.

BBC Culture, Cath Pound 2017

Dairylea 2019

Oil on gessoed panel
(12.2 x 8.6 inches, 31x22cm)





Liverpool Love Group Print 2012

Inkjet on 310gsm Archival Paper 50/50 (23.6x23.6 inches, 60x60cm)

Printed by Coriander studios/CCA Galleries

Signed by artists: Sir Peter Blake, Yoko Ono, Noel Fielding, Christian Furr, Chris Bracey, Terry de Havilland, Jay Battle, Brad Faine, Jonathan Gent, Ben Johnson, David Mach, Bruce McLean, Mike McCartney, Roger McGough, Chris McInerney, Brendan Neiland, Shauna Richardson, Dallas Seitz, John Stoddart, Stephen Walter.

Liverpool Love was a unique art exhibition founded by Furr and his uncle Vaughan Davies. In 2012, Furr curated the inaugural exhibition and auction, hosted in collaboration with the New Museum of Liverpool. It was a celebration of the city of Liverpool through the artistic contributions of twenty-three world-famous and emerging artists. The exhibition culminated in a gala auction which helped to leave a legacy to the children of the nominated local charity Claire House Children's Hospice. The artists produced unique Liverpool-themed artworks for the occasion.

This is the last remaining signed group print from the exhibition.



Boogie Nights 2013

Bracey/Furr

Found chrome plated vintage bust of Lenin mounted on Stove enamelled black metal background with Murano ruby red crystal neon glass. Unique (41.3x31.4 inches, 105x80cm)

A year after creating 'Neon Beatles' for Liverpool Love, in 2012, Furr worked together again with his friend – the late neon artist Chris Bracey – on the 'Staying Alive Neon' collection which launched at 45 Park Lane (Dorchester Collection) in 2013. It was billed as a neon exhibition of 'Art, Rock and Poetry, Inspired by Einstein, Edison and Essex'. 'Boogie Nights' is an example from the series which was diverse in subject matter.

I had a head of Lenin on my mantelpiece for ages and took it to Chris as I thought we could do something with it. I knew I wanted to apply a chrome finish to it like the eighties movie 'Terminator'. Together, we decided to put a red neon body on it inspired by John Travolta in the film that defined the disco generation – 'Staying Alive'. We gave it a 'new spin' on the dancefloor. It celebrates the liberating effect of music and art.

In 1919, Vladimir Lenin was actually enthusiastic about new mass communication technology, like the radio and the gramophone and its capacity for educating Russia's mostly illiterate peasant population. He recorded eight speeches on to gramophone records. The idea of fusing the likeness of Lenin's head onto a 70s Bee Gees inspired body is both disjunctive and surreal, but completely in keeping with the artistic tradition, beginning in 1925, of the Surrealist invention of 'Cadavre Ezquis' or 'Exquisite Corpse', where unlikely or random things are artistically placed together with bizarre results.

#stayingaliveneon





Coast to Coast 2017
 Aboudia /Furr
 Acrylic and Oil pastel on Linen
 (72.8x61 inches, 185x155cm)



#AboudiaFurr

Canival

The first ever showing of a painting from the 'Canival' series - by Aboudia and Furr. Abdoulaye Diarrassouba (born in 1983), also known as Aboudia is an African contemporary artist based in Brooklyn, New York who works from his studios in Abidjan and New York City. As a former street-kid or 'nouchi' he witnessed the Ivorian civil war in 2011.

In the studio, both artists worked together on the large canvases at the same time and responded to each other's actions in real time.

This series is really freeing for me, like jazz is to a musician. Sometimes 'upping your game' means letting go of everything you know. I find the best things happen for me when I am able to lose myself in the process of painting. Painting these works was immediate and instinctive and there was no time to think. We both bring our own sub-conscious themes, colours and motifs to the paintings and our own cultures too. It's a great buzz when you think you might have visually invented something that hasn't been done before.

Why do I collaborate? Two reasons: Firstly, I think a style is a limitation. Oscar Wilde said, "To define is to limit," and as Picasso said, "As an artist you have to be prepared to assassinate yourself." Secondly, it is good working with somebody else sometimes. An artist's life can be a solitary one and it is good to bounce ideas off someone else and have a creative companion. In music, artists work together all the time and the best surprise us with every new creation. Think of the Beatles or David Bowie. Bowie's last video was really weird and funny and I certainly didn't expect it, but that is why he was so good. I like the story of the American artist Philip Guston and how he suddenly stopped doing abstract works and started strange figurative works. I like to be surprised.



Jimi – Sun Gold 2017 - (Featuring Jimi Hendrix 1967)
Furr/Mankowitz

Unique hand finished Chromaluxe® print on aluminium with Metal Gold Leaf and Copper Leaf, acrylic paint, oil pastel, diamond dust. 1 of 5
(42.1x42.1 inches, 107x107cm)



At the same time as working with Aboudia, Furr was working on another collaboration with his friend of two decades; respected music photographer, Gered Mankowitz.

Gered photographed incredible musicians, often at the start of their careers, capturing their potential and star quality in a classically stylish, intimate and honest way.

45RPM is a collection fusing the world of photography and painting and the title references the forty-five revolutions per minute of the vinyl single.

Christian and Gered decided to produce a collection merging both their skill-sets, but presenting the archive in a completely new colourful form. They met at Gered's studio in Cornwall, where they selected the images which form the basis of the series. They explored themes and agreed colour treatments after Furr had brought some painted tests from his studio in Richmond. After this, Gered produced the first prints in early 2017 and shipped them to Furr's studio where he applied his painting work – adding colour, brushwork and gilded areas to express each subject's nuances. The work merged naturally to form the '45RPM' series which includes portraits of Jimi Hendrix, Marianne Faithfull, The Rolling Stones and Kate Bush.



#blackeyeneon

Black Eye - Third Sight 2018

Kindly on loan from Colt Technology Services Ltd

Fabricated acrylic and perspex fitted with Murano neon glass, '7Black' body nano material. 1 of 3
(136x56x20.3cm)

'Black Eye - Third Sight' is a neon artwork that incorporates a nanoblack material, or a 'super black', that Furr initiated. This black absorbs 96% of light. This artwork and material was launched at a one-night preview as part of 'Lates' at the Science Museum in London last year, but this is the first time it has been on show to the public in a gallery.

In 2016, Furr was responsible for breaking the story of Anish Kapoor's exclusive agreement of the artistic usage of Vantablack - the first 'blackest black' paint which is also used in the coating of stealth fighters. He had been informed by the makers of Vantablack that he couldn't use the material and spoke to the press: "This black is like dynamite in the art world".

Furr resolved to create a nanoblack that would be freely available to whoever wanted to use it. The opportunity to do this came when he was commissioned (through RADAR London) by Colt Technology Services Ltd to create a work of art for their HQ in London. A neuroscientist friend, Brad Pietras, introduced Furr to Imperial College's deputy director Deeph Chana and scientists Francois de Luca and Hin Chun Yau, who eventually helped to create a new super black that he could use in this piece.

Eyes or vision have been valid themes for artists for some time. The title 'Black Eye - Third Sight' refers to the appearance of one of the eyes being black, the description of a bruised eye and also the concept of the 'Third Eye' or the 'pineal eye'.

One of the inspirations for creating the neon glasses actually came from seeing an Asian optician's glasses sign. What would a pair of spectacles that would help my inner vision look like? A pair of glasses that would help me see everything at the same time - past, present and future, light and dark.

I wanted the glasses to have extreme contrasts that illustrated different types of perception; the bright side is pink as it references the phrase 'Looking at the world through rose coloured glasses'. The void in one eye versus the picturesque in the other. Non-meaning versus meaning. Death versus Life. One eye absorbing and one eye radiating.

AWARDS

- 2019 Ambassador of Culture for Wirral, New Brighton Pavilion
- 2007 Guest Speaker, London Best Learner Awards, House of Commons
- 2005 MCCA Best Award – Robinsons Commission
- 2004 AoC Gold Award, House of Commons
- 1991 Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Scholarship

SELECTED COMMISSIONS

- 2013 Dita Von Teese
- 2011 Blenheim Palace painting, GE
- 2008 HRH Crown Prince Sultan Bin Abdul Aziz
- 2005 The Big Paint, Robinsons
Robinsons commissioned the artist to produce a commemorative work of Art featuring Tim Henman and Fred Perry for Wimbledon. The queuing public recreated the image on a giant 16x9ft canvas at Wimbledon. 'The Great Draw' won The Best Award for 'Best & Most Effective Long Term Communication Campaign' at the MCCA Awards (Marketing Communications Consultants Association) 2006
- 2002 Cardinal Cormac Murphy O'Connor, Westminster Cathedral
- 2002 Bishops O'Donoghue & Stack, Westminster Cathedral
- 2002 Sir Donald Irvine, President General Medical Council
- 2001 Professor Robert Shaw, President RC of Gynaecologists and Obstetricians
- 2000 Dr Robert Kendall OBE, President of the Royal College of Psychiatrists
- 1999 John Dougill, Chief Executive; Institution of Structural Engineers
- 1998 Roger Sainsbury MA F.Eng F.I.C.E President, Institution of Civil Engineers
- 1997 Dr Lotte Newman CBE, FRCGP, President Royal College of General Practitioners
- 1997 Noel and Leslie Botham; French House
- 1995 Queen Elizabeth II; Royal Overseas League
- 1993 Maneck Dalal, Chairman; ROSL
- 1990 Professor of Microbiology, Leicester University

EDUCATION

- Kingston College – BTEC Graphic Design
- De Montfort University – 1st Class Degree in Fine Art
- Wirral Metropolitan College – Foundation Course

PUBLICATIONS

- 'Take Art' – John Blake Publishing 2008
- 'The Lost Art' – John Blake Publishing 2007

SELECTED COLLECTIONS

- HRH Duke of Edinburgh
- Nic Roeg
- Blenheim Palace
- 45 Park Lane (Dorchester Collection) – London
- Hotel Cafe Royal – London
- The Ritz – London
- Jerry Hall
- Britvic
- General Electric
- Michael Caine
- Sir Peter Blake
- The Denham Estate
- De Montfort University
- Leicester University
- The Maudsley Hospital – London
- Roehampton University
- Wirral Metropolitan College
- The General Medical Council
- The Royal College of General Practitioners
- The Royal College of Psychiatrists
- The Royal College of Obstetricians
- The Institution of Civil Engineers
- The Institution of Structural Engineers

EXHIBITIONS

- 2019 45RPM – After Nyne Gallery, London
- 2018 Art Car Boot Fair, London
- 2017 Art Car Boot Fair, Folkestone/ London
- 2017 45RPM, Dorchester Collection, 45 Park Lane, London
- 2016 Art Angels, Beverly Hills, Los Angeles, USA
- 2016 Box Galleries, London
- 2016 Campbells of London, London
- 2016 London Art Fair, Business Design Centre, London
- 2016 Knight Webb Gallery
- 2015 GX Gallery, London
- 2015 Club Hotel Cafe Royal, London
- 2014 Lights of Soho, Brewer Street, London (with Chris Bracey)
- 2014 Liverpool Love at Liverpool Contemporary (Curator and Exhibitor), World Museum
- 2014 Cat Art Show LA – 101 Exhibit Gallery, Los Angeles, USA
- 2013 Staying Alive (with Chris Bracey) – 45 Park Lane, London
- 2012 Liverpool Love, Museum of Liverpool (Curator and Exhibitor)
- 2011 Permanent Collection – 45 Park Lane, Dorchester Collection, London
- 2011 Teenage Cancer Trust – Maison Bertaux, London
- 2011 Outside the Square – Margate
- 2010 Art Of Giving – Saatchi Gallery, London (Judge and Exhibitor)
- 2009 RWS/Sunday Times Watercolour exhibition – Bankside Gallery, London
- 2008 Four Contemporary Masters – Harrogate
- 2008 Edinburgh Art Fair – Edinburgh
- 2007 Art At Golden Square – London
- 2007 Royal Portrait Society – Mall Galleries, London (Invited Exhibitor)
- 2006 Art of Love – Arndean Gallery, Cork Street
- 2005 DACS 20th Anniversary Exhibition – Mall Galleries, London
- 2003 LondonArt – Jak Gallery, Hoxton, London
- 2003 'The Archive' – The Untitled Gallery, Hampstead, London
- 2002 CISAC World Congress Exhibition for DACS – Queen Elizabeth II Conference Centre, London
- 1999 National Portrait Award – National Portrait Gallery

- 1994 Royal Portrait Society Annual Open Exhibition – Mall Galleries, London
- 1993 Winsor & Newton Young Artist's Award/ROI Exhibition
- 1993/4 Artfair – Francis Kyle Gallery, London
- 1992/3 Royal Overseas League Annual Open Exhibition
- 1991 East Meets West – Smiths Gallery, London
- 1989 John Players National Portrait Award – National Portrait Gallery

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2010 Chelsea Arts Club, London
- 2009 Jefferson Wells, 'True and False' – Regent Street, London
- 2008 Love Your Art – York
- 2016 Chelsea Cheese Show – Chelsea Arts Club, London
- 2003 Beatrice Royal Gallery – Hampshire
- 2000 La Sinfonia – Key West, Florida
- 1997 Royal College of General Practitioners – London
- 1993 The Duffer of St George – London
- 1993 Royal Overseas League – London
- 1993 The Tricycle Gallery – London

My greatest thanks go to my family and friends:

My wife Emma, and daughters Colette, Daphne and Anika Furr, Angela and Peter Furr, Mary Davies, John and Diane Blake, Vaughan Davies,
Steve Sainsbury, Ged Adamson, Steve Cope, The Ackerman family, Issiaka Toure, Sue Higginson,
Brendan Neiland, Brad Faine, Alison Bailey Smith & Colin Simpson.

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Wed - Sun 10:00 - 17:00

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