

## STEPHEN FINER

*"...in a way: all paintings are mute"*

Paintings of Seán Hewitt and other People

7 November 2024– 24 January 2025



*Naked woman squatting*, c.2020, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 91.5 cm

We are delighted to announce **Stephen Finer's** fourth solo exhibitions at Art Space Gallery which takes as its title a line from **Seán Hewitt's** poem *The Slur of the Heart*; a poem co-commissioned in 2021 by Manchester Literature Festival and Manchester City Art Gallery in response to **Derek Jarman's** *Protest* exhibition at the Gallery. Following a chance discovery of the poem by Finer an exchange of messages took place that led to a meeting and paintings that feature in this exhibition. The poem hasn't been included in any of Seán Hewitt's books but features with his happy encouragement in the catalogue for this exhibition.

The relevance to **Stephen Finer** of Hewitt's poetic words comes into focus when we look more closely at the paintings and his approach to a practice that takes the human head, or the human figure, as the subject. Some he names: **David Bowie** and **Iman**, **Marlene Dietrich**, **Patrick Garland** in the past and more recently **Seán Hewitt** and **Mike Gwilym** performing as Troilus at Stratford. Others he simply refers to as *Head of a Woman*, *Naked Man Sitting*, but his motive is clear, and that is, to reveal something more profound than an immediate likeness.

He is secretive about his way of working and resists discussion about his aims and methods. There is no evidence of preparatory drawings but he does take photographs and his shots of **Bowie** feature in two recent books and on the cover of **Nicholas Royle's** recent *David Bowie, Enid Blyton and the sun machine*. But it is without doubt that his experiences of people, in one form or other, fuel his approach.

In terms of technique some are dense and heavily painted, others more spontaneous, but the paint is applied with a vigour and directness that probes the limits between representation and abstraction. It may not always be possible to identify individual features but there is a conspicuous and striking human presence.



*Troilus (Mike Gwilym) RSC Stratford, 2020, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 91.5 cm*

Stephen Finer (b. 1949) studied at Ravensbourne College of Art & Design (1966-70) and has exhibited regularly in London and abroad since the eighties. Numerous prestigious group shows include *The Portrait Now*: National Portrait Gallery (1993-4) and his portrait of **David Bowie** is in the permanent collection of the National Portrait Gallery. Work is also held in The British Council Collection, Arts Council together with other museums and private collections in Great Britain, Germany, Ireland, Spain, Switzerland and the USA.

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A 40 page catalogue can be viewed on line at: [www.artspacegallery.co.uk](http://www.artspacegallery.co.uk)

Gallery hours are 11am to 6pm Tuesday to Saturday