

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Culture Type

On View: 'Denzil Forrester: A Survey' at Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

21 May 2019

Victoria L. Valentine



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The pulsing rhythms and dynamic energy of London's reggae and dub nightclub scene in the early 1980s are palpable in the work of Denzil Forrester. His large-scale paintings are characterized by "vivid color, gestural brushstrokes, and frenetic compositions." Spanning the four decades (1978-2019), new and historic works by the artist are on view at Stephen Friedman Gallery. The survey precedes the debut of his public art installation at the Brixton Underground Station in London in September and a major exhibition of new works at Nottingham Contemporary in January 2020. This week, Forrester is in conversation with British art critic Louisa Buck about his new monograph (May 23 at Stephen Friedman). The volume features a foreword by artist Peter Doig and contributions from Sam Thorne, director of Nottingham Contemporary, and curator/art historian Eddie Chambers of the University of Texas at Austin. Born in Grenada, Forrester lives and works in Cornwall, UK. He joined Stephen Friedman in December and this is his first exhibition with the London gallery.

"I just wanted to draw movement, action and expression. I was interested in the energy of the crowd, particular dance movements and what the clubbers wore. In these clubs, city life is recreated in essence: sounds, lights, police sirens, bodies pushing and swaying in a smoke-filled room." — Denzil Forrester

"Denzil Forrester: A Survey" is on view at Stephen Friedman Gallery in London, April 25-May 25, 2019



Image: Denzil Forrester, "Wolf Singer," 1984 (oil on canvas, Diptych, overall: 338 x 400.8 cm / 133 1/8 x 157 3/4 inches). Copyright Denzil Forrester. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London.

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Image: Denzil Forrester, "From Trench Town to Porthtown," 2017 (oil on canvas, 127.7 x 162 cm / 50 1/4 x 63 3/4 inches). Copyright Denzil Forrester. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

Last year, Denzil Forrester's *From Trench Town to Porthtown*, was on view at the Jackson Foundation Gallery in Cornwall, UK. The retrospective curated by artists Peter Doig and Matthew Higgs was titled after the above painting in which Forrester depicts a Rastafarian in handcuffs at the beach, flanked by police officers.

The Guardian newspaper asked the artist what the painting is about. Forrester said: "I started painting Porthtown beach [in Cornwall] and I said: 'I'm going to draw black people on the beach.' But it was

too calm, it needed a punch, so I used one of my older paintings 'Three Wicked Men,' which Peter Doig bought for the Tate, to give it a kick up the arse. It was like superimposing something from London on to a beach in Cornwall. I painted 'Three Wicked Men' in 1982—the title was a reggae record at the time about a businessman, a policeman and a politician."

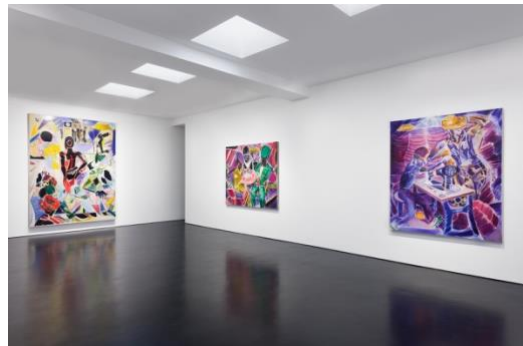


Image: Installation view "Denzil Forrester: A Survey," Stephen Friedman Gallery, London (2019). | Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Image: Denzil Forrester, "Night Owls," 1995 (oil on canvas, 152.5 x 182 cm / 60 1/8 x 71 5/8 inches). Copyright Denzil Forrester. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

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Image: Denzil Forrester, "Catch a Fire," circa 2010 (oil on canvas, 184 x 152.8 cm / 72 x 60 1/8 inches). Framed: 187.6 x 157cm (73 7/8 x 61 3/4 inches). Copyright Denzil Forrester. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Image: Denzil Forrester, "Knights of Dub," 2005 (oil on linen, 115.3 x 127.6 cm / 45 3/8 x 50 1/4 inches). Copyright Denzil Forrester. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Image: Denzil Forrester, 'Velvet Rush', 2018. Oil on canvas, 204.4 x 273.4 cm / 80 1/2 x 107 5/8 inches). Copyright Denzil Forrester. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Image: Installation view "Denzil Forrester: A Survey," Stephen Friedman Gallery, London (2019). Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

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Image: Denzil Forrester, "Passing By," 1999-2001 (oil on canvas, 188 x 165.6cm / 74 1/8 x 65 1/4 inches). Copyright Denzil Forrester. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

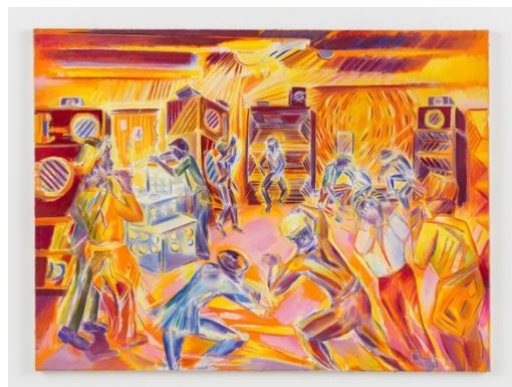


Image: Denzil Forrester, "Shebine," 2005 (oil on canvas, 122 x 91.8 cm / 48 1/8 x 36 1/8 inches). Copyright Denzil Forrester. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Image: Denzil Forrester, "The Cave," 1978 (oil on canvas, 146 x 170.3cm / 57 1/2 x 67 inches). Copyright Denzil Forrester. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London

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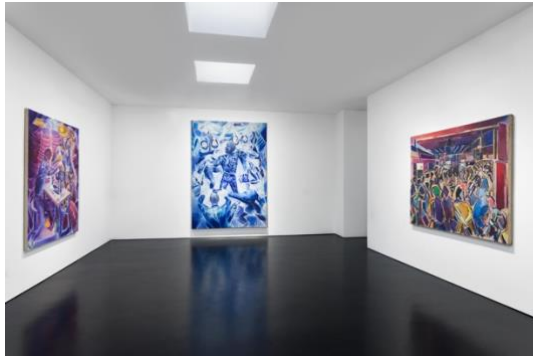


Image: Installation view "Denzil Forrester: A Survey," Stephen Friedman Gallery, London (2019). Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Image: Denzil Forrester, "Youth of the Day," 1989 (oil on canvas, 120.6 x 180.7 cm / 47 1/2 x 71 1/8 inches). Copyright Denzil Forrester. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London



Image: Denzil Forrester, "Duppy Deh," 2018 (Oil on linen, 201 x 305 cm / 79 1/8 x 120 1/8 inches). Copyright Denzil Forrester. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London