

Stephen Friedman Gallery

Time Out
Denzil Forrester: A Survey review
May 2019



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Art, Contemporary art Stephen Friedman, Mayfair Until Saturday May 25 2019



Copyright Denzil Forrester. Courtesy the artist and Stephen Friedman Gallery, London.

4 out of 5 stars

Denzil Forrester's paintings don't look like the kind of art you normally find in contemporary galleries. They aren't full of nods to art history, they're not drenched in conceptual theorising and they don't fit neatly into the canon of Western art history. Basically, they don't look exactly like everything else. And thank fuck for that, because that's what makes them great.

Forrester is a black British artist who for 40 years has been painting scenes from reggae and dub clubs. His ultra-bright works are throbbing with dancing bodies, thrumming with movement and chaos. This is London life

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captured in single moments: people, parties, police, sound, culture and sweat. There are DJs hunched over turntables, MCs holding their mics in front of huge speaker stacks while severe, angular policemen watch on. There are moments of calm among the chaos, there are people lost in the moments, but in general, this is life at its most alive.

Forrester's not a neat or particularly formal painter, and some of it is a bit messy. But there's something unique about this. His figures don't look like Rembrandt's, his faces don't look like Picasso's. His is a different voice: a black, London voice, separate from the stuffiness of the commercial art world. It's not what you normally see in fancy galleries, and we should be seriously thankful for that.