

MULTI _PLO



Samuel Bassett

Samuel Bassett

Samuel Basset (b. 1982, Cornwall, UK) lives and works in the city of Cornwall, where he grew up in a family environment of fishermen and farmers, a visible cultural heritage in his works. His first approaches to art were through abstraction and British modernism (from the 40s to the 60s) whose works (Feiler, Hilton, Lanyon, among others) he discovered as a teenager, walking by the city, seeing them through the glass of the galleries. He studied Illustration at the University of Bournemouth, but before that he was already "committed" to painting and had done some works. In 2009/2010 he held his first personal exhibition in Cornwall and gradually he was connecting with other practices of the artistic world such as curatorship, exhibitions and projects such as After Projects- One Of One (London, 2019).

Influenced by his environment, Basset's works explore nature from human perception. With a self-referential, intimate and panoramic language, his paintings and sculptures reflect local cultural identity elements, sometimes becoming a visual metaphor for the landscape. The prominence of blue on the canvas represents his connection with the sea, and, although he also uses other colors such as red, ochre or black, his work is distinguished by wavy blue brushstrokes in ephemeral movements. Through various techniques and materials such as acrylic and ink, the form appears between juxtaposed layers and drawn elements.

Basset was elected to the Newlyn Society of Artists and has made solo shows at various renowned galleries such as Galerie Kornfeld (2018), Anima Mundi (2019) and Vigo Gallery (2020). He has participated in international art fairs such as Untitled (2018, 2020) and CODE art Fair (2018). His paintings and illustrations are part of important private and public collections such as the Tremeneheere Sculpture Gardens, Cornwall; and they have been used in many different contexts, including music album covers and public art projects.

BETWEEN THE FLOWERS

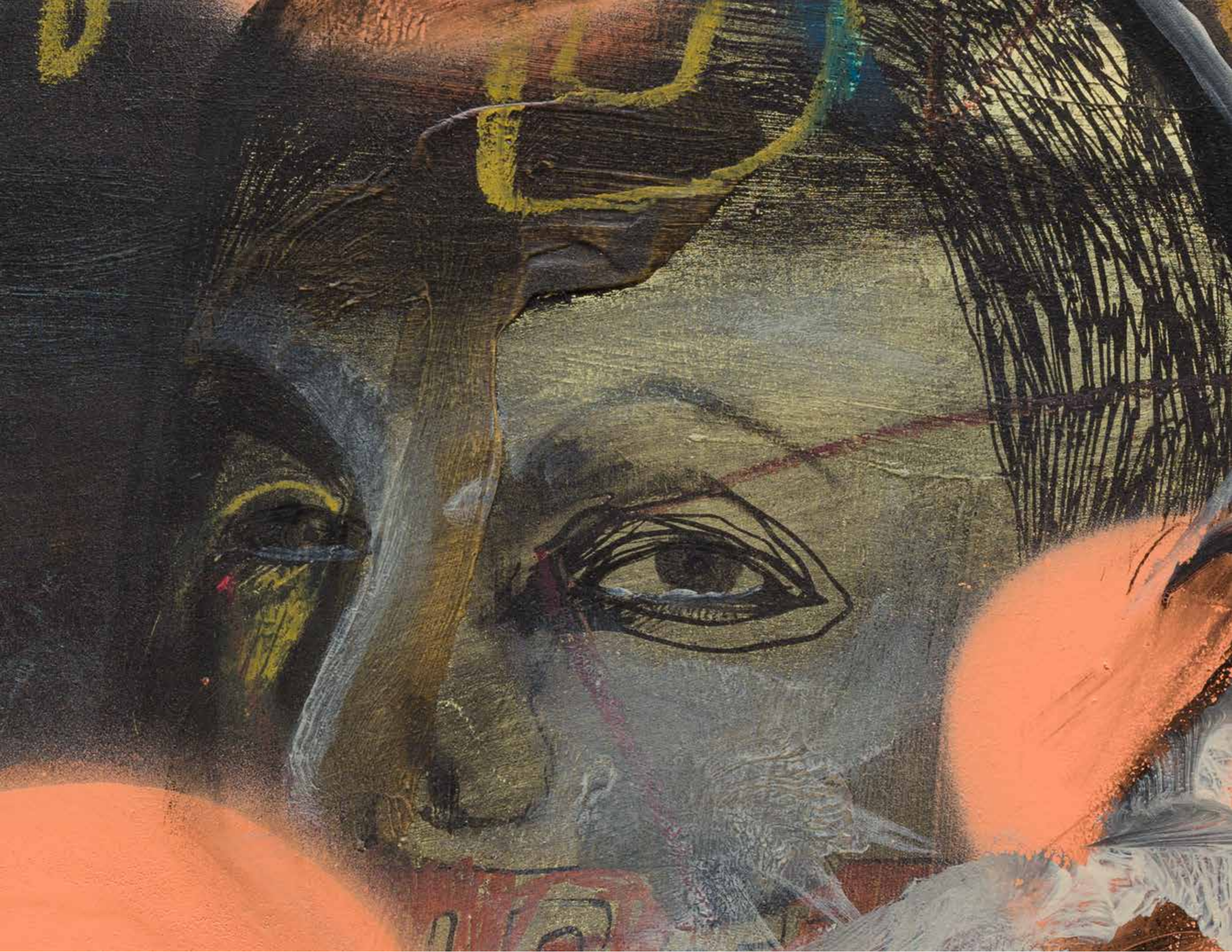
Silkscreen print, 38.7 x 29.1 in. (98.5 x 74 cm)
Produced on 320 g 100 % cotton Canson paper



From the free and spontaneous drawing the characters emerge in the work of Samuel Basset. Every detail in the composition is an indicator of the status quo that relates the objective and subjective and turns it into beautiful transparencies and textures. Representation and narrative are strengthened through the writing of poems and other texts on the work, as a means that makes visible and dialogues. With a varied palette, Basset paints what he writes and writes what he paints: it is not a circle, it is an o; it's not a 2, it's an ear, or both. The word and the figure complement each other. This self-portrait with flowers connects and reflects on nature.

The signs transcend the obvious while man looks straight ahead, confronting and enveloped in his own sea. The questioning arises from self-referential experiences and concerns of the artist about the different ways of interpreting, thinking and living: the landscape is his home.

Between The Flowers, is an edition of 40, printed on 320g Canson 100% cotton paper, which guarantees extraordinary color and good preservation.





Good times outside the studio for a good time in it

– an interview with Samuel Bassett

by Sandino Scheidegger

We haven't met. I know it's not easy to talk to a stranger about yourself, but what should I know about you to get a better understanding of you and your work?

I work here in Cornwall in the UK, where I'm based. My work is autobiographical. It's about here, it's about what's on for me personally and it's a recording of time and this place. I'm into it all, you know; I like to play, I like to make things.

What makes an email conversation differ from meeting you in the real world?

Well, it doesn't feel real; it's not a conversation, really. Personally, I like meeting people rather than writing down words. There is more to a conversation than written words, I feel. Reading people in front of me is easier than reading or writing words. So yeah, if you were here, it'd be easier. The difference is: this is shitter.

Where would you have taken me if I had visited you in your hometown of St Ives?

Well, I don't live there anymore. I recently bought a house with my partner near a town called Penzance and moved my studio here too. I would drive back to St Ives though. Probably struggle to park and get pissed off. I'd say: 'let's just drive out to Zennor, go tinnners!' We could have a pint and take a walk down and out along the coast. I'd take you somewhere I like to draw from, take you through the fields and on to the cliffs. I'm scared of cows, though. So we would have to avoid them if possible.

If we did stay in St Ives, obviously we could go for a game of air hockey in the arcade, do a lap of town to say hello to everyone, show you some old haunts, chat about the place and the funny times we've had here, growing up and of late. I love fun

We could visit the Barbara Hepworth sculpture garden for a bit of peace and see her workshops; maybe walk up the back way and down over to the Tate for a look at their permanent display. They have an amazing collection on show. Great examples of works by the artists that put St Ives on that map a few years back and some good examples of artists and works that tie in. Amongst these, they have my favourite work: The Fisherman's Fairwell (1928) by Christopher Wood.

That's the richest part of town for me, beyond its natural features. We could have gone up to my gran's house for a pasty, but she died. So I suppose we could go to the sloop (a small sailing boat with one mast) for a pint or just go for a swim at Porthgwithden—chill on the beach. In my head it's late summer. It'd be a good day.

I'm in! You mention the branch of the Tate Gallery. Do you think of St Ives as a remote cultural outpost with a lively art scene? Or do you consider it to be more of a quiet space for artists to focus on their work away from the hustle and bustle of London?

St Ives has a great history, but it feels a little trapped, like a museum. Obviously there are still people working there where I had my studio space at Porthmeor Studios. Generally, I feel the Penwith peninsula has a great collection of artists, from painters, sculptors, photographers, film makers, writers, dancers etc. You know, all of it. I feel more excited when we escape St Ives and see these people who are dotted around the Penwith and a little beyond.

The Tate is a great resource and has a dedicated team, who are connected with the community through many routes, which is great. The new extension has enabled them to put on some great exhibitions and also have this permanent display. But yeah, for a small place, there is a richness in its people and what they are doing. It's a place where you can be part of the art scene in some way or work remotely and not know or care what's going on. It's just happening here and a lot of it is tied in and about here. Not just a wealth of diversity in the mediums and outcomes but in the collective enquiry into the place.

How do the town and its seaside inform your paintings? Your paintings often portray very specific situations with very specific titles, spanning the entire expanse between reality and its collapse. I'm thinking of your painting Beach Comber, for example, which shows workers sifting through trash on a beach full of tourists. Or there's Burning Boat, with people burning their own boat as a final call for help—maybe off of the very same beach!

My paintings reflect the landscape and they have subtle references to the painters that worked here before, but they're more about life, derivative of my personal life here. They are emotionally tied to the place and to my upbringing here; to anxieties, isolation, and changeable qualities like the weather, tides of people, mental states—not just the sea, you know. The highs also, the fun of the place. This place does inform them; the work is of it, but I try to make a more ambiguous setting for my narratives. Removing them from it all slightly. So yeah, from cleaning the beaches and swimming at night, watching my dad return from sea to bigger shifts, changes of industry and landscape and all. As I say, it's all tied in. Paintings are informed by all sorts, as far as my memory lets me delve.

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SAMUEL BASSETT

Horizons never go anywhere. They always seem to guide and entice us, as they do in many of your paintings – the horizon as magical line, as frontier between the known and what lies beyond. What draws you to them?

The fact that there's always one here. When I moved to London, I'm sure I had mirages. I'd see one, I'd see the sea down the bottom of Kingsland road. But yeah, always seeing it, growing up, it asked questions: what's it like beyond that line? But, in a way, it remains an unreachable line, always there, however far away.

Horizons keep you hungry, ambitious, as they set a finish line. But obviously, as you reach it—whatever it was—, another goal is set, the horizons move further away. Visually, they set a painting for me; give it a place or sense of place. I guess landscape painters always orient themselves with horizon lines. I am a landscape painter first, before I'm anything else.

The art world is known to be full of jetsetters – or at least it was, until Covid-19 hit. You, however, have said that you never felt the urge to fly and go places. Did you ever think of exploring the seas behind the horizon in your early days?

I don't like flying. I'm sure the stress of each flight takes a day off my life, but I do love travelling and witnessing new things; seeing and learning, definitely trying good food. Then again, maybe I travel by painting; I can paint myself anywhere I want. I can even be in many places at the same time, while being happy in my studio. I'm a big daydreamer anyway, always somewhere else apparently. I'm sure one day, maybe I'll go for residencies or just find a place that interests me enough to work from.

But until then, I am happy here. I did always fancy it, though. I feel like this, here, is where and what is important to me and the work I am making. I did look around and think: maybe I should be there, part of that, what's going on, try this. But I'd just be tricking myself at this point. No point in chasing something that isn't going to help me. I've kind of tied myself to this bit of granite and it feels right for me. I can comment from here.

Being a painter can be lonely at times – but this seems not to be in your nature. You haven't started talking to the figures in your paintings, have you?

Haha! Yeah, a bit of a one-way conversation. During the first lockdown, Covid time, I made about 400 works on paper. I was drawing through ideas and making plenty of new paintings of myself in front of a mirror, making self-portraits of me in the garden, dreaming to be outside beyond this with other people! This is where my painting *Between The Flowers* was created, which is used for the large-scale print with Multiplo.

I do love the studio but normally, when I can work quickly, a few hours in the studio is good enough. Then I need to get out, talk to people and engage in social activities. I need a good time out of the studio to have a good time in the studio.

How would you compare the practice of printmaking to painting, and what inspired you to explore the intersection of the two and release a silkscreen print with Multiplo?

I've worked in print and mostly self-published in order to explore material and a traditional technique like etching, which I was interested in. I love playing with any material. It helps get diverse outcomes and I really like print as a thing.

I am however so bad and lack the enthusiasm to reproduce works of art. That's why editioning becomes tiresome. So now I love to work with people that can help me and masterfully do this part of the work. I know it takes a lot of skill and knowledge to do this. I lose it past the initial idea or first parts of the process. I have a lot of respect for these masters.

Thank you Samuel for the interview!

Press

11/03/2018

Samuel Basset

24 Oct — 17 Nov 2018 at the

Galerie Kornfeld in Berlin, Germany

Wall Street International

Galerie Kornfeld is pleased to present the first exhibition of new and recent work by British artist Samuel Bassett in Germany.

Developing a distinctive voice by diving head first into auto-biography, Bassett's works catalogue his day to day life with honesty, humour and pathos. This auto-biographic approach to painting leads Bassett to work in a figurative manner, making the figures in his painting an allegory to his life. Further themes in Bassett's art are of boats and fisherman as a reference to the traditions of his home town, St. Ives, as well as to his family background, and to contemporary leisure life. Questions about how our world is changing and how we place ourselves in-between the past and the future are raised.

Often in Bassett's paintings, a central figure is depicted as interacting with another sort of matter, this may be: paint, another figure or an abstract shape. This "matter" creates a material connection to "abstraction" which introduces paint as a subject in these paintings. Flat painted shapes edit and lay down spatial relationships in Bassett's work. Flat planes of colour spatially create distinctions between the reality of the figures and of the backgrounds that his figures struggle to emerge from. Hidden in layers of paint in the backgrounds of Bassett's surfaces are familial figures, 'haunting' the memories and realities of the scenes depicted.



Samuel Bassett *One an All*

Formally, the works pull their figurative subjects into a sea of marks and abstracted gestures, referencing the kind of bravado of Abstract Expressionist painters like Willem de Kooning and Robert Rauschenberg. And indeed, with a similar commitment of expressions of profound emotion, writer William Cook remarks on Bassett: “He speaks from the heart about the things that move and trouble him, He paints the language of dreams and memory. His paintings describe his hopes and fears. His work is ... about the way he feels about the world.”

Born in 1982 in Cornwall, UK., the artist studied in Bournemouth, UK, lived in London for a short time but relocated to his home town of St. Ives to focus on his art. In St. Ives he continues to work in the prestigious Porthmeor Studios, that are above his Grandfather's former net loft. The studios were previously occupied by Francis Bacon, Ben Nicholson and Patrick Heron among others who formed the St.Ives Modernists.

St. Ives has been his family's home since 1695. His painterly development has been greatly influenced by the artistic traditions of the town influencing his work stylistically and thematically. Furthermore, his family, fisherman by trade and artists at heart, act as both physical and emotional support to the artist.

Bassett's work is widely exhibited with a solo presentation at START at the Saatchi Gallery in London, in group shows at the Falmouth Art Gallery and the Newlyn Exchange Museum (both UK) and three solo exhibitions at Anima-Mundi in St. Ives. Samuel Bassett's works are held in collections around the world including the Tremeneere Sculpture Park where his work is permanently installed amongst other luminaries such as: James Turrell, Kishio Suga, Richard Long and David Nash. Bassett's work has been featured in numerous publications including Christie's Magazine and The New York Post.

After successfully presenting the artist at Code Art Fair in Copenhagen earlier this year, Samuel Bassett will be shown with Galerie Kornfeld at the Untitled Art Fair in Miami.

02 / 21 / 2017

Samuel Bassett 'The Great Squall'
by William Cook



ST IVES COMMUNITY TV

The first time I met Samuel Bassett was at Tremeneere, a sculpture garden in his native Cornwall. I liked him straight away. Most artists tend to be a bit buttoned up, but Sam was easy to talk to. With his broad grin and his boyish good looks, he could have been the lead singer in a garage band. The next day, I went to see him in St Ives, a few miles from Tremeneere. "I really hope I like his art," I thought, as he led me into his studio. There's nothing worse than liking someone, then finding you can't stand their work.

The small room was full of paintings. Big canvases, six feet across, stacked in piles against the walls. Sam dug out a few out to show me. I was amazed. This was like nothing I'd ever seen before, yet I recognised it straight away. You know how the best music sounds unique, yet strangely familiar? Well, it's the same with painting. A true artist creates his own world – but once you step inside it, it feels as familiar as your own.

The people in Samuel Bassett's paintings are precise and delicate, etched with draughtsman-like finesse. The forces that surround them are enormous, brutal, elemental. His characters are submerged in vast dark seas, battered by savage storms. He attacks the canvas with angry splashes of vivid colour. The fragile figures in his paintings often look a lot like him.

Borlase Smart
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Samuel Bassett *Alone at the sea*

Samuel Bassett was born in St Ives and he has recently returned, and the town has been his family's home since 1695. The artistic traditions of the town had an undoubted influence over him as a young boy, but his Grandfather, a fisherman by trade was also a keen painter, as was his other Grandfather in Newlyn. They supported him with encouragement but also with painting materials. He now occupies a studio above his Grandfather's former net loft.

His work is autobiographical, cataloguing the day to day of his life with honesty – both humour and pathos. Providing an insight in to his fast paced unique mind, the work displays enormous energy and experiment. His paintings could be described as a 'psychological cubism', where the inner and the outer self reveal themselves and coalesce.

Over the last few years his life has had significant highs and lows. Much of his work, writing and research has been an attempt to seek guidance and clarity during this time. The period of lead up to the making of this exhibition, he recalls reading Dante's *Inferno* as notable in his attempting to deal with navigating an unfamiliar personal path. This coincided with a rediscovery of the paintings of the Sieneese School and in particular Duccio and Botticelli from the Florentine School. Looking at paintings and diagrams benefited Bassett's greater understanding as he drew ideas from these works and delved deeper in to wider symbolism. He began replicating contemporary versions of the stories illustrated in these works; creating personal parables or parodies, the process bringing a cathartic understanding and balance, and guide to where he wants to be, as a person and an artist.

Some works also take influence from closer to home specifically the artist Peter Lanyon, in particular his work 'The Yellow Runner' from 1946. Lanyon painted this having just returned home to St Ives, it is warm, energetic and joyful and Bassett felt an immediate connection. His most recent works imbue a celebratory connection to his home – his landscape, its community and his heritage.

It usually takes an artist a lifetime to find their own voice. Sam has found his already, and that's what gives these pictures their raw power. He speaks from the heart, about the things that move and trouble him. He paints the language of dreams and memory. His paintings describe his hopes and fears. There are echoes of other artists in his work (Bacon, Baselitz, Schiele...) but these fleeting similarities are coincidental. His work is utterly his own. His artistic training has given him a mastery of paint and an eye for detail, but he hasn't been stifled by art history. There's nothing self-conscious about his work, no attempt to be like or unlike other artists. It's autobiographical, expressionistic. It's about the way he feels about the world.

I met Sam again in London, a few months later, at the Saatchi Gallery, where he was showing a selection of his work. Talking to him again, I realised I'd slightly misjudged him. I realised his happy-go-lucky attitude was only part of who he was. It wasn't the whole story, of course it wasn't – the paintings told you that. They had that sense of human suffering which all great artists share. Looking at these paintings made me see him in a different light. There was some sadness behind that broad grin, some suffering behind that breezy manner. You could hear it in his laughter. You could see it in his eyes.

He was man enough to admit that life's experiences often overwhelm him. A lesser artist shirks crisis. Sam confronts it in his painting. He paints the good times and the bad times. Whatever happens in his life, it happens on the canvas, too. Painting is his secret diary, his confessional, his *raison d'être*. 'For me, making art is a need and a must,' he says. Look at the paintings. It's all there.

Samuel Bassett was born in St Ives, in Cornwall, in 1982. If you already know Cornwall, you can skip this bit – but in case you don't, you need to know that Cornwall is a place apart, as different from England as Wales or Scotland, and that St Ives is one of the most historic and atmospheric towns in this wild and lovely land. A long, narrow peninsular, jutting out into the Atlantic, Cornwall feels separate from the rest of Britain, and Penwith, where Sam grew up, feels separate from the rest of Cornwall. A few miles from Land's End, surrounded on three sides by open water, it's like an island. London is a day's drive away. With the rest of England so remote and distant, its people have always looked beyond Britain, out towards the wider world.



Samuel Bassett *The Great Squall*

Artistically, St Ives is unlike anywhere else in Britain. Perched on the edge of England, you'd think it'd be a sleepy backwater, but for a century this little seaside town has been at the cutting edge of modern art. In 1920, the great British ceramicist Bernard Leach established his own pottery here, and in 1939 Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson came here to escape the Blitz. They were joined by some of the best British artists of their age: Terry Frost, Patrick Heron, Roger Hilton... Francis Bacon came here too (he actually painted in Sam's old studio). Even Mark Rothko dropped in. Sam is now part of this grand tradition, but with one important difference. Most of those famous artists were outsiders, Londoners looking for a great escape. Sam's Cornish roots go a lot deeper. His father comes from St Ives, his mother comes from Newlyn, and his family have been in Penwith for at least 300 years. His father was a fisherman, sailing all the way to Ireland and the Bay of Biscay. He was a miner too, before Cornwall's ancient tin mines closed. For Sam Penwith isn't just a pretty place to paint – it's part of who his is. He loves the wildness of the sea, especially in winter. 'The sea's very black – it's almost like oil,' he says, as he talks me through one of his latest paintings. Most artists come to paint Penwith in summertime, and depart when the weather turns. This is what the sea really looks like on winter's day, as darkness falls, after the holidaymakers have all gone.

Sam isn't the sort of artist who stands in front of a canvas for hours on end. He works in short concentrated bursts, focusing all his energy into intensive sessions. This emotional intensity is reflected in his art. "I've been married, I've had a child, I've been divorced – I've had no money, I've had good money..." But whatever else is going on, his art is always there. "I've had a good year," he says. "I'm excited about the next steps within my painting." He never knows where it will lead him. It's a journey into the unknown, a voyage of discovery. Who knows where will it take him next?

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