

# EARLY BLACK:

RECENT PAINTINGS BY  
MARK HANSON

Opening: Saturday 11th June, 11am, drinks 3-6pm  
Open: Sat, Sun, Mon 11am - 6pm or by appointment  
Closing (last day): Monday 13th June

Mercer Chance is proud to present an exhibition of recent work by Mark Hanson, featuring paintings made over an intense period of pure painterly observation.

We find each as if stumbling onto an abandoned battleground; a surface tortured by struggle. Form, colour and markmaking fight for precedence in the artist's mind; the painting a cumulative record of those tussles. The strength of this work is the balance it strikes between these conflicting and complementary concerns, and in knowing when to call a truce; to stop and allow the painting to retain the integrity of one continuous lived experience.

Each painting starts on slippery ground; smoothly primed boards or aluminium plates provide the perfect surface for a process of mark-making and erasure, decision and revision. Every mark must prove itself the most efficient, most gesturally satisfying solution to each problem that arises in the search for an overall statement of truth. They are executed with a bold wilfulness, and a certain capriciousness, but are always purposeful, and manage to avoid stylisation through their dogged, improvisational, heart-on-the-sleeve dedication to translating the seen and felt experience directly into paint.

The subjects of the paintings are acutely seen, and definitely individuals, but these do not feel like portraits; the sitters have become something other, a character in the artist's strange psycho-graphic drama world. There is perhaps a sadness to these images, like scratched and folded polaroids and passport photos of lost loved ones which become our only blurred trace of their likeness, slippery and flawed. Among these bristle a series of self-portraits which are more confrontational, drawing us shaving-mirror close. We sense the artist probing for the inner structure of the face, seeking the simple theme that underlies the fleshy surface, yet enjoying that surface for all its bruised permutations of colour and subtle modulations of form which are the cloak of age and experience.

**Mercer Chance Gallery,**  
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