

The Power of Pictures David Messum

Those who insist that painting is dead - and that concept is infinitely more important than execution in today's clinical and cynical art world - should consider the power of pictures by Agustí Puig.

If painting ever died, then this is the art of resurrection. Catalan artist Agustí Puig is acclaimed on the continent after a string of successful exhibitions across Spain, France and Germany. His images proved a real show stopper in our Spirit of Barcelona group displays, and smaller works sold out on our stand at the recent Affordable Art Fair.

Now this great hope of contemporary European painting is claiming a second solo showing in our Cork Street gallery. Using a basic earthy and fiery palette -- ochres, searing white, flame, terracotta, ash, charcoal Puig puts the colours of cave painters and industrialisation to a new and impassioned purpose. He seduces our senses with the spontaneity of his lino and the sparks of his concentrated energy.

Steeped in the history of art and the practice of Catalan artists (Picasso, Miró, Gris, Tàpies) with a further hint of Britain's Roger Hilton - he expresses an astonishing range of emotions with a minimum of motifs.

A face, a bottle, an arrow and, most of all, the contours of the female body can be traced within the abstract patterns of pictures which spill across oftentimes canvases, boards and paper sheets. They emerge from a frenzy of creation on the floor of a former factory - a process which also leaves the artist spattered and crusted in pigment.

Each of the pictures illustrated here is a new exploration. All express afresh the exhilaration of sensual experience and the joy of paint.

Painting never really died, of course. But in the latest and greatest works of Agustí Puig it is kicking - and dancing and singing.