

PRESS RELEASE**Vortic London Collective****Norman Hyams****The Party****10 - 31 August 2020**

These new paintings by Norman Hyams are all party scenes. They reference a black and white photograph taken some 40 years ago at his partner's childhood birthday celebration. Norman came across the photo and felt an immediate connection with the image: it is atmospheric, rich and intense; its composition is chiaroscuro and dynamic.

Over the past few years Norman Hyams has consistently made paintings of this photograph, each time involving colour, mood and atmosphere in different ways but always concluding with a sombre, reflective tone. When Norman paints the party scene he never attempts to enlarge or change the image, instead scrutinising and interrogating its details, focussing or cropping particular elements. Norman paints the works by building up colour first and then works backwards to find the correct mood.

Repetitive mark-making is displayed with febrile and fugitive energy, building the pace, dynamism and texture of complex and multifaceted psychology. The rhythm and tenacity of Hyams' brushwork is central to its effect, demonstrating his affinity for composition and gesture. Layer after layer, loop after loop, claustrophobia sets in. His approach is nevertheless stoic, and his work remains so, significantly inspired by the formal qualities of abstract art. Despite their subject these new party paintings are reflective of how he feels in the current moment. As usual, he cannot get away from himself in the painting - regardless of their celebratory genesis, they contain an insurgent darkness and humility.

Norman Hyams exerts this as a form of 'teaching himself how to see': the process of repetition is a way of continually finding new feelings in an image as opposed to achieving familiarity. Throughout his practice figures, landscapes and patterns return and repeat themselves - a form of haunting. His paintings reveal austere and melancholic domestic scenes, sombre impassioned portrayals of everyday life. Minimally executed, they evoke dark and quiet memories, souvenirs, captured through elusive portraits, apocryphal heirlooms and vignettes of a hidden past. As voyeurs we glimpse them; rows of terracotta tiles, houses stacked on houses, the tennis court; a girl forlorn at her desk, a husband and wife entwined, a lover standing at the dressing table, and in this case the gathering of guests for a birthday celebration. In each case a history is told, a narrative beckoned. These are our chance souvenirs of a painting practice that reflects and revels in the confluence of image, memory and action.

Norman Hyams (b. 1966, London, UK) lives and works in London. He graduated from Chelsea College of Arts in 2006. Solo exhibitions include *Knowledge*, Turps Gallery, London, UK (2019); *serious pursuits - loops, sacks and tennis courts*, Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK (2017); *Ethos*, Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK (2017); and *Norman Hyams, RUN*, London, UK (2007). Selected group exhibitions include *A Very Long Wait*, Newchild Gallery, Antwerp, BE (2020); *Crowd*, Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK (2020); *ABSINTHE §3*, Spit & Sawdust, London, UK (2019); and *Soirée, Fiery Friary*, 88 Friary Road, London, UK (2017). Norman is currently artist-in-residence at The New St Ives School, August - September 2020.