

PRESS RELEASE**Bobby Dowler*****Roadworks*****12 Feb – 26 March 2022**

For over a decade, Bobby Dowler has collected that which nobody else wanted. Salvaging orphaned artwork from the streets of London, Paris and Tuscany; assembling spare materials gifted to him by fellow artists, or purchased on the fly from local flea markets. Known for his material austerity, Dowler's work uses and reappropriates the detritus of his shifting urban environment to pursue a vision of painterly abstraction that is not only progressive and formally challenging, but deeply embedded in the physical and psychological structures of social space. Now working from a post-industrial studio in La Sira, Paris, *Roadworks* is Dowler's fifth solo presentation with the gallery and celebrates a continuation of his bold improvisational style with a new self-reflective and critical approach.

In contrast to previous bodies of work, in which figurative and kitsch paintings are unstretched, cut-up and reworked through Neo-Dadaist principles, Dowler's recent practice has been driven by newfound clarity and scale. Comprising a series of large-scale, two-tone monochromatic works, the paintings displayed in *Roadworks* are a series of singular visual planes, defined less by tableaux of post-modern geometry than by sheer intensities of psychological mood and social inference. Nonetheless committed to central and recurring art-historical questions of authorship and objecthood, these new works are further emboldened by the introduction of the artist's own hand, as well as visual cues to parallel social issues of valorisation and neglect, labour, precarity and chance.

Working with a variety of second-hand stretcher frames and a suitcase of reclaimed linen and canvas (first acquired in Peckham over ten years ago), Dowler's new works use a combination of oil and acrylic on gesso, constructing his surface with speed and applying his choice of colour with emotional and painterly intuition. Drawing comparisons to colour field and abstract expressionism, Dowler at once pays homage to and subverts his canonical forbearers. Using vivid shades of lilac, pink, blue, yellow and gold, gestures toward the hard-edged seriality or affective zones of these painterly styles are deeply embedded in the work, yet immediately unsettled through the inconsistencies of his ready-made frames, which reveal the illogical, mercurial nature of everyday human action and experiment with elements of chance and circumstance in both their construction and execution.

Suffused with neon, reflective tones, the works are equally reminiscent of later neo-conceptual abstract canvases. For Dowler, an emphasis on our hyperreal, digital and media-controlled landscape is key to his own cut and paste technique, echoing a vernacular of visual dissemination native to the age of the internet. However, this immaterial sensibility is questioned and sublimated through Dowler's new works, as overtures of an implicit physical labour are brought to the visual fore — not only symbolic of cyberspace, the pearlescent hues seen here are most commonly experienced in the mundane reality of building-sites, safety workwear and roadworks — the unexpected and incidental events that alert and complicate our relationship to the city's never-sleeping streets.

It is from this sentiment that the exhibition takes its name, and its disruptive effect no more keenly felt than in its dialogue with the history of minimalism and post-painterly abstraction. Having spent his teenage years working on building sites with his father and brother, the honesty and precarity of manual work has long been of interest to Dowler, and in many ways his paintings can themselves be seen as an act of building, creating hybrid 'painting-objects' through intuitive forms of composition and the application of material. Further allusions are made to the nature of structures, through the subtly arched edges of his canvases, a formal consequence of his painting which inflects the work with tactile, architectural motifs. In conversation with his art-historical precedents, Dowler's intimations of construction and physical labour bring to attention not only shared values of sincerity and determined work, but also the often carceral forms of masculinity that have come to define both cultures.

*Roadworks* is an exhibition which brings together Dowler's enamoured view of the city — its intensity, scale, and haphazard nature — with a recognition and fidelity to his own painterly references and personal experiences. The works on display continue a long-standing interest in spontaneous discovery and incidental beauty, matched with newfound energy for large-scale works of rich and effervescent colour. They reference the street, its texture and happenstance, capturing the inherent dynamism of the everyday within the formal register of painting. Despite their abstract narrative, it is clear that a language persists between these works: an unconscious set of connections and counterpoints, sincere in meaning and signification, light in essence or source. It is in this state that the unpredictable is met with a daring permeance, and imposition balanced with fleeting joy.

**Bobby Dowler (b. 1983, London, UK) lives and works between Paris and London.** This is his fifth solo presentation with the gallery, following from *Hooking on* (2015), *Odd Paintings* (2011), *Catastrophe* (2008) and *Many Worlds* (2008). Dowler's work has been presented widely and internationally, including at the 53rd Venice Biennale, the Musée du Fumeur, Paris, and the Villa Lena Foundation, Tuscany. Recent selected solo exhibitions of his work further include: *<<"100,000%!">>* (2021) and *I will find one* (2018) at Galería Alegría, Madrid, ES; *Something must happen, Sometimes It Happens*, Studio Humberto Poblete-Bustamante, London, UK (2017); *L'œuvre: A Question of Form and Necessity*, Dino Morra Gallery, Naples, IT (2016); and *All thought is in signs*, Kunstverein fAN, Vienna, AT (2016).