

go . go . Pitch-BLACK Night!



Martin Finnin, Studio Cork 2017

Martin Finnin

GO GO PITCH BLACK NIGHT

7 June – 1 July 2018

John Martin Gallery

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*"Titles become micro poems, a collection of fragments on a painting's journey.
They try to describe things that there are no words for."*

Each summer Martin Finnin packs the contents of his Cork studio into an old ambulance and drives from Ireland to a friend's farm in the hills outside Lucca in Italy. Here he paints for several months, returning to Cork in the autumn. By then some canvases will be finished and those that remain unresolved will continue to be worked on through the contrasting environment of an Irish winter. The development of the paintings for this exhibition was recorded by his wife Maria in a series of photographs taken between 2015 and 2018, some of which are included here next to the finished works. They offer a fascinating insight into his ideas, recording moments on each canvas that now only linger as faint shadows beneath months of later revisions.

Finnin works instinctively. Every step in the progress of a painting is a response suggested by the painting itself: "Paint is its own boss", he says, "...sometimes it's better just to observe how it wants to be...colours and shapes emerge and if they work they stay, if not they are wiped away. This process can continue for months, sometimes years". The struggle is over when every element of the canvas feels right, each playing its part in the whole and yet maintaining a sense of spontaneity and immediacy, "a freshness that needs to be captured at the right time then left untouched, a moment when everything is in balance".

Qualities in his work that one might expect to derive from the light and colour of the Tuscan landscape find their way into the paintings only obliquely; perhaps in a title or a combination of colours or shapes discovered in the early Renaissance paintings he visits around Tuscany. The dramatic possibilities of darkness came about after seeing one of the earliest paintings of a night scene, Piero della Francesca's 'Legend Of The True Cross'. "Night gets a bad press", says Finnin. "Miscreants hiding in doorways, monsters, mysteries; real and imagined fears existing under cover of darkness.". Finnin revelled in the substance of night and subverting the darker connotations of darkness. Instead, paintings like 'Go Go Pitch Black Night' and the irresistibly titled suite of etchings, 'The Prints of Darkness', became a series of joyful night-time adventures which were to help define the direction of the show.

And yet the myriad influences of his environment, travels and observations have but a tiny influence on the outcome of his paintings. These influences may shape him, but don't directly affect the paintings. More importantly, if there is one constant thread in his work, it is that not a single element should be recognisable: not a sign or symbol or combination of colours that may hint at something external. To be complete and finished, the paintings must exist in their own right, not in reference to anything else. Weightless, freed from our need to impose meaning, his paintings create a space that is new and continuously fascinating. Don't try and understand Finnin's paintings; they defy any attempts to be read or interpreted, they exist only in themselves, describing things there are no words for.

John Martin



*Chemical Constables and
the Untwisting of Ampersand*
oil on canvas, 145 x 225 cms

Cork 2017





Chemical Constables and the Untwisting of Ampersand
oil on canvas, 145 x 225 cms



The Mechanics of Doing Nothing
oil on canvas, 100 x 80 cms



Go Go Pitch Black Night
oil on canvas, 120 x 150 cms



A Flaming Bowl of Ice Cream
oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cms



A Foot Above the Rest
oil on canvas, 100 x 120 cms



The Last Blue Dot on Earth
oil on canvas, 160 x 120 cms

Cork 2016-17



The Last Blue Dot on Earth
oil on canvas, 160 x 120 cms
CORK 2017-18





On the Third Floor of Probably
oil on canvas, 120 x 180 cms

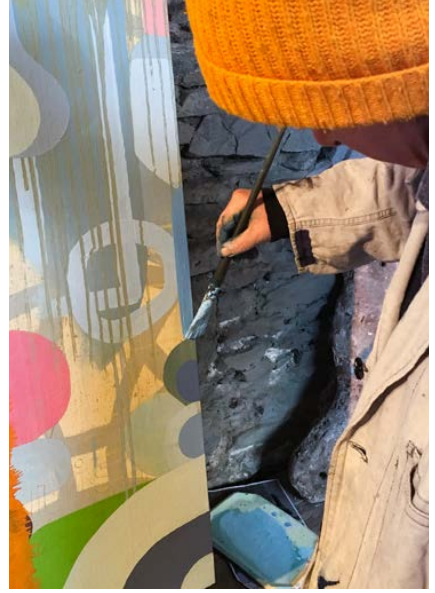


In the Heat of Darkness
oil on canvas, 100 x 80 cms



A Slow Blaze of Blossoming Numbers
oil on canvas, 145 x 225 cms

Cork 2017

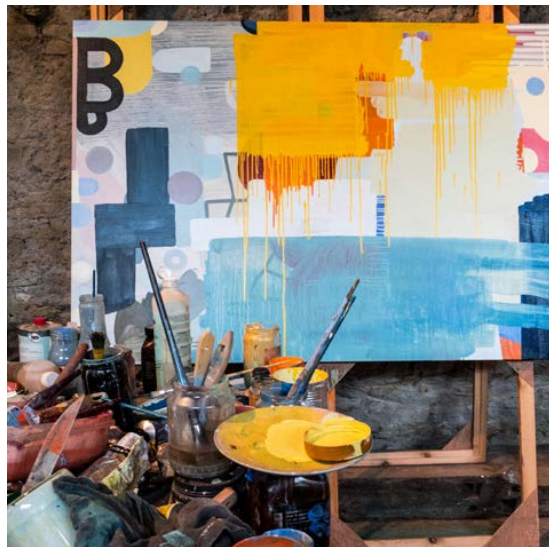




A Slow Blaze of Blossoming Numbers
oil on canvas, 145 x 225 cms



Combing the Hair of the Posse
oil on canvas, 120 x 100 cms



Free Falling into the Fact of the Matter
oil on canvas, 120 x 180 cms

Cork 2016 & Lucca 2017





Free Falling Into the Fact of the Matter
oil on canvas, 120 x 180 cms



The Marriage of Mechanical Pollen
oil on canvas, 120 x 180 cms



My Tribe Ran Off
oil on canvas, 100 x 80 cms



A Low Flying Memory
oil on canvas, 100 x 120 cms



The Wild Self-Conscious
oil on canvas, 120 x 180 cms

Cork 2016-17



The Wild Self-Conscious
oil on canvas, 120 x 180 cms

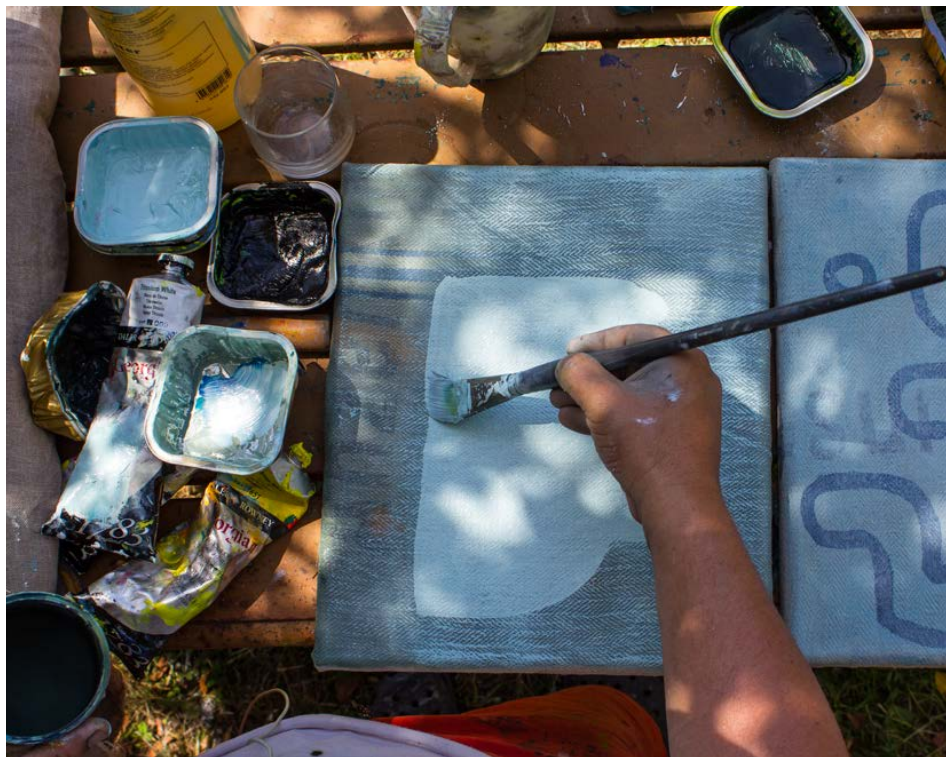


Rebel Without a Pause
oil on canvas, 120 x 180 cms

Lucca, 2015 & Cork 2016-17



Rebel Without a Pause
oil on canvas, 120 x 180 cms



Painting small canvases, Lucca, Italy 2017



Olive Tree in Moon Shadow
oil on canvas, 33 x 27 cms



Doing the Lap
oil on canvas, 33 x 27 cms



Spheres Hugging a Solid
oil on canvas, 33 x 27 cms



Cypress Tree With Approaching Circle, Italy
oil on canvas, 33 x 27 cms



Cypress Tree Talking to the Neighbour, Italy
oil on canvas, 33 x 27 cms

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