

Wrestling WITH THE SURREAL

JIM MOIR IS BETTER KNOWN AS COMEDIAN **VIC REEVES**, BUT RECENT ARTISTIC OUTINGS REVEAL A MULTI-TALENTED MAN WITH AN ENDLESSLY CREATIVE MIND. **SALLY HALES** AND **NATALIE MILNER** ASKED HIM HOW AND WHY HE PAINTS

ABOVE *German Brutalist,* acrylic and sand on canvas, 60.5x92cm
RIGHT, TOP TO BOTTOM *Orange Wrestlers*, acrylic on canvas board, 60x80cm; *Bull I*, charcoal on paper, 29.5x42cm

Anyone who remembers the 1990s' TV comedy *The Smell of Reeves and Mortimer* will hardly be surprised that, when one of its creators' thoughts turn to painting, the outcome veers towards the surreal. Indeed, a look at Jim Moir's – aka Vic Reeves – recent exhibition of paintings and drawings, *Wrestlers, etc*, at London's Grosvenor Gallery revealed an imagination at full throttle. Works taking in the surreal, amusing, bizarre and sinister are clearly the product of constant creativity. "I think putting your imagination on canvas or a television screen is the same thing," says Jim. "If you've got an idea, you have got to have an outlet for it. So if it's painting, poetry, singing or acting it all comes out somewhere."

Art is a life-long passion for 58-year-old Jim. He studied at Sir Cass College in Whitechapel in the 1980s, later working as a curator at an independent London gallery, where he held his first art exhibition in 1985, with the help of a council grant. *Wrestlers, etc* – his fourth London show – followed his work appearing at the Royal Academy of Arts Summer Exhibition 2017, where he won praise for his striking use of colour and LS Lowry-esque tendencies.

"All art and artists inspire me," he says. "There are too many to name." Indeed, his subjects seem as varied as his inspirations, encompassing celebrity, nature, architecture and fantasy. At the heart of *Wrestlers, etc*, was a vivid series of acrylic on board works featuring intertwined

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fleshy figures with Fauvist overtones. Confident, fluid mark-making and strong use of colour combine to leave the pieces lingering between a figurative representation of masculinity in action and a semi-abstract sense of something softer and more suggestive. But, in typically oblique style, when asked about his inspiration, Jim answers: "I woke up one day and wanted to paint wrestlers."

The exhibition also featured dramatic charcoal works, studies of Brutalist buildings in acrylic and sand, as well as surreal caricatures and self-portraits, cityspaces and sketches. Moir's use of media and practice is as free-spirited as his subject matter. "I use all sorts of materials from glue to Tarmac, as well as oils and watercolour," he says. "It's about the end product and how it looks when I feel happy with it. Some paintings I have worked on for years and still go back to them." His practice isn't limited by space or place, either. "I work everywhere I can," he adds. "On the train, in my shed and in an art room I have at home." As an artist as well as a comedian, it is clear Jim is in possession of the kind of creative energy that refuses to be tamed or defined.

See more of Jim Moir's art at www.vicreeves.tv; www.grosvenorgallery



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