

Norman Hyams  
*Vermilion Tablecloth*

Online Exhibition  
January 16 — February 20, 2023

The deeply personal works of Norman Hyams transcend everyday experience and present an intimate vision of his creative process and unique artistic freedom. Departing from personal narratives and archival imagery of his closest relatives, Hyams creates captivating realities devised and densely populated by characters and objects that oscillate between the soft and the grotesque. In this exhibition, *Vermilion Tablecloth*, his subject matter is seemingly mundane and familiar; yet defies straightforward interpretation and radiates a pictorial style disconnected from a sense of time and space, culminating in an encounter between thought and feeling.

The works in Hyams' *Vermilion Tablecloth* are visceral and instinctive. They display fluid narratives sparked by a black-and-white photograph of a birthday celebration of the artist's wife as a child. In the photograph, a large table stands at the centre of the image, cluttered with crockery, a large cake and a variety of characters. The table is flanked by a large window on one side and a small painting on the other. A series of characters of various sizes, and presumably ages, surround the table in an atmosphere of festivity, eating, interacting with each other, or curiously gazing back at the camera. Inspired by this intriguing photograph and its compositional richness, Hyams began working on a series of paintings called *The Party Series* in 2017. In *Vermilion Tablecloth*, the artist presents a further exploration of the series, introducing paintings brimming with new and varied meanings through a technique that intimately joins sentiment and aesthetics.

Hyams omits pictorial accuracy and instead uses aesthetics as a tool to create distorted narratives to captivate the viewer. In each composition, Hyams underlines specific elements and presents the artist as "an actor trying to inhabit each individual painting, giving them each an expression, based on the experience of the human condition." In this manner, the works in *Vermilion Tablecloth* are the outcome of an aesthetic journey anchored in the act of capturing the right atmosphere, with the power and ability of music being a major influence of the artist to focus attention on different spheres. Music is essential to a complete understanding of the affective dimension of the works and art-making, as presented by Noel Carroll in his *Art and Mood: Preliminary Notes and Conjectures*. Carroll states that "we may listen to music of a certain pronounced affective quality or contemplate some other type of artwork in order to allow it to guide reflection in such a way that it enables us to recognize and to explore the mood in question."

Several of the paintings in *Vermilion Tablecloth* are realized on an intimate scale that draws the viewer closer; yet the porosity of the image incites the discovery of a material that resembles a memory rather than a photograph. In *Party (Yellow with green spots)*, one is confronted with an obscure and hazy feeling that renders the familiar strange, leaving room for the viewer to contemplate the underlying spirit of the painting, which may reflect an alternative reality. The gestural painting depicts characters and objects fading into one another in unidentifiable elements. A dark colour pallet interspersed with subtle yet fleeting tones of white and yellow intensifies the painting's unsettling mood further, while the randomly placed dark-green dots bring us back to the surface of the painting. An inward journey that pushes right back out.

In his work, Norman Hyams fearlessly shifts between abstraction and figuration, creating a powerful repertoire of images that have become not only his visual vocabulary but part of his personal iconography.

**Norman Hyams** (b. 1966 in the United Kingdom) graduated with a BFA in Fine Art from Chelsea College of Art in 2006. He also completed the Turps Painting program in 2016, which takes place in the iconic Aylesbury Estate in South East London. His works have been exhibited in numerous exhibitions, such as *A Play of Features*, Union Gallery, London (2022); *Too Young to Fruit*, Wevet\_projects, Coachwerks Studios, Brighton (2022); *Ancient Deities*, Arusha Gallery, Edinburgh (2020); *A Very Long Wait*, Newchild Gallery, Antwerp (2020); *The Party*, The Vortic London Collective with Hannah Barry Gallery, London (2020); *Crowd*, Hannah Barry Gallery, London (2020); *Knowledge*, Turps Gallery, London (2019, solo), among others. He currently lives and works in London.

*Vermilion Tablecloth* is on view online from January 16 to February 20, 2023.