

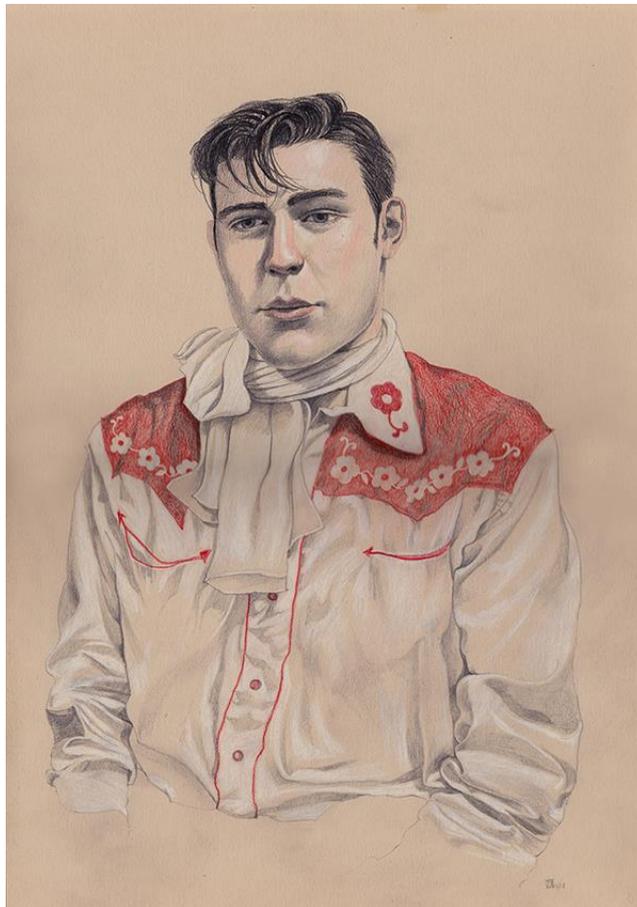


Fairhurst

Gallery & Framers

Press release - for immediate release

First solo exhibition in Norfolk for acclaimed artist Stuart Pearson Wright



Elvis, Stuart Pearson Wright, 2018

A Norwich gallery is set to host the first solo exhibition in Norfolk by one of Britain's most celebrated portraitists.

(Elvis x 20) + (Tom x 1) will showcase the astonishingly detailed work of artist Stuart Pearson Wright.

Taking place at the Fairhurst Gallery the exhibition will feature 20 drawings of Elvis tribute acts from across the country and one portrait of a Tom Jones tribute act.

Artist Stuart Pearson Wright studied at the Slade School of Fine Art before going on to win the BP Portrait Award in 2000 aged 25.

His subjects have included the author JK Rowling, the Duke of Edinburgh and actors John Hurt, Keira Knightly, Daniel Radcliffe and Sir Michael Gambon.

Stuart has drawn inspiration for the exhibition from an eager interest in the idea of people taking on different characters in their lives.

In 2006 he exhibited a body of work detailing the portraits of more than 30 actors including Alan Rickman, Ben Wishaw, Keeley Hawkes and Sir Ian McKellen.

Stuart said: "For many years I've been interested in the idea of people who become someone else and are, in a sense, a character when you meet them.

"I did an exhibition of portraits of actors particularly because I was interested in the process of people transforming from one identity to another and the moment at which a person's own identity dissolves and they become the character they are playing. I'm intrigued by that strange middle ground between the two identities.

"On a very obvious level an Elvis tribute act is a person pretending to be someone else and pretending to be another person. There's this one specific identity that's shared by a vast number of people, all of whom become that one person and that's a very specific situation.

"I think what particularly interests me about it is the sense there's almost a democracy – this process where almost anyone can become Elvis. We have people of very broad ethnic differences, even gender differences, we have people from all walks of life, ages, people of all shapes, sizes, colours - all becoming the same person. So it's a wonderful, democratic process for me, I enjoy that idea."

Stuart has spent the past year travelling across the country drawing a diverse selection of Elvis's including an Indian man, a woman and a young disabled man in a wheelchair.

Stuart said: "It's the inclusivity of the activity that appeals to me: the fact that anyone can become Elvis and share in his identity. You get so many different kinds of people deciding to become an Elvis tribute act for so many different reasons. In their own lives they may be in a job where no one pays them any notice and then they become Elvis and they have people cheering at them.

"When they become Elvis they are able to leave their own lives and their own anxieties behind and for that moment they can feel the adulation of the crowd and that's an exciting thing in itself."

Galley director Dulcie Humphrey said: "We are extremely proud to be working with such a well-established and highly regarded artist.

"Stuart is not only astonishing in his technical capabilities, but the concept of this exhibition is sensitive and touching with a nuance of humour.

"This subtle balance of drama, psychology, performance and humanity is one that only a great artist can strike successfully."

(*Elvis x 20*) + (*Tom x 1*) will be only the second time Stuart has exhibited a collection of drawings.

Stuart, who moved to Suffolk from London four years ago, said: "I've never exhibited in Norwich before. I've lived here for nearly five years and Norwich is my local city and since living here I've wanted to be a part of its creative life and this is a chance to do that and I'm genuinely excited."

The exhibition is on at The Fairhurst Gallery from 7 December 2018 until 2 February 2019. The gallery is closed for Christmas from Sunday 23 December until Tuesday 8 January 2019.

Accompanying the exhibition will be a catalogue available from the gallery shop.

The gallery, on Bedford Street, is open Tuesday to Saturday, 9.30am to 5.30pm with additional viewings available by appointment.

For more information visit www.fairhurstgallery.co.uk

Stuart is also exhibiting a new body of work at the Heong Gallery in Cambridge. *HALFBOY* runs from 2 November 2018 until 6 February 2019.

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Notes to Editors:

About Fairhurst

Tucked away in the Norwich Lanes, once a 17th century skittle alley and formerly the Cat Trap jazz club, the Fairhurst is a unique gallery space, hosting regular exhibitions.

The Fairhurst Gallery champions contemporary fine art, bringing variety and brilliance to the city of Norwich. With a view to developing the careers of new professional artists and helping established practitioners reach new audiences, The Fairhurst repeatedly show inspirational work of the highest standards.

The Fairhurst Gallery also offers a traditional framing business as well as a bespoke restoration service, with clients including stately homes around the region, Norwich Cathedral, Norwich Castle and the Sainsbury Centre.

About Stuart Pearson Wright

Stuart Pearson Wright is an artist living and working in Suffolk, England.

Born in 1975 in Northampton, Stuart drew with enthusiasm from an early age and after considering becoming an actor, finally opted for art school. He studied at the Slade School of Fine Art in London.

During his time at the Slade, Stuart won a travel award from the National Portrait Gallery as part of its 1998 BP Portrait Awards. He drove around Britain in a van, producing sketches and paintings as he went. The resulting exhibition at the National Portrait Gallery was called *From Eastbourne to Edinburgh: A Painter's Odyssey*. Godfrey Barker in the Evening standard labelled Stuart "A Hogarth for our Times" and Brian Sewell was to describe the paintings as "images of such eccentricity and even madness that they fit perfectly the English tradition of the odd man out: the Blake, Spencer, Cecil Collins line, and the largest of them should at once have been bought by the Tate".

In 2000 a chance encounter with the actor John Hurt in Old Compton Street led to a small portrait on oak, which was subsequently bought by the National Portrait Gallery along with a portrait of the Ballet dancer Adam Cooper.

Earlier that year Stuart's career had taken an unexpected turn when he won the first prize in the BP Portrait Awards for his painting *Gallus Gallus with Still Life and Presidents*.

Stuart made the headlines in 2004 with the release of a portrait of the Duke of Edinburgh. The painting featured a bare-chested Prince with a bluebottle on one shoulder. The portrait, which had been commissioned by the Royal Society of Arts, was refused by them. Later that year Stuart curated an exhibition at the Jerwood Space in London called *Being Present* featuring the work of eight painters.

Another commission which made the headlines was a portrait of the children's author J.K.Rowling. Commissioned by the National Portrait Gallery. This portrait took Stuart nearly a year to complete and saw his work moving in a new direction. The portrait was conceived in the manner of a regency toy theatre, with the figure painted onto a flat cut-out, mounted in a three-dimensional space.

Stuart's interest in the theatre, and the concept of artifice led to his next exhibition in 2006, called *Most People are Other People*: a collection of forty portrait drawings of British and Irish actors. The work was exhibited at the National Portrait Gallery and the National Theatre in London.

In 2007 Stuart had a solo exhibition at Galerie Huebner in Frankfurt called *The Hole in the Bucket*.

In 2009 Stuart co-ran a project space on Vyner Street called Five Hundred Dollars. He curated a group drawing exhibition called *Kunskog* which featured the work of Gillian Wearing, Michael Landy, Paul Noble and Ged Quinn, amongst others.

Stuart has in recent years had three exhibitions at Riflemaker in Soho, London: *I Remember You* in 2010, *Together in Electric Dreams* in 2012 and *Love and Death* in 2013. During that period Stuart's work has expanded beyond painting to include film, sculpture and music. He made a film installation with the actress Keira Knightley called MAZE and recorded a vinyl album of country and western classics which featured as the backdrop to *I Remember You*.

Stuart moved from East London to a set of castle ruins in rural Suffolk in 2014 with his wife and two children.

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