

R H O D E S

SQUARE GO

Stewart Swan

Opening Reception - Thursday 1st Feb, 6-8pm ([RSVP](#))

Exhibition dates - 2nd Feb - 2nd March



Stewart Swan in his Glasgow Studio

RHODES is delighted to announce 'Square Go' the UK debut exhibition from Scottish artist Stewart Swan. This new collection from Swan is shaped by his imaginative and grotesque style. Forms of man and beast become one as his signature subject, emerging as surreal and darkly humorous portraits.

Glasgow-based, Swan's creations reflect the city in which he lives and works. He draws inspiration from the people and characters he encounters day to day, which find their way into his canvases through facial features, expressions, and turns of phrase. These portraits feel tangible and emotive, despite their often-unhuman subjects. Each piece almost acts as a caricature of Scotland itself, gritty and intimidating yet tongue-in-cheek, indicating the artist's genuine warmth for his homeland.

The almost human, sometimes animalistic subjects play into the perceived reputation of Glasgow – seemingly bleak and possibly dangerous. Swan’s characters are nonetheless permeated with the distinct character of this city, tough and hard-wearing yet playfully witty. The works are grounded and devoid of pretence, offering a familiar melancholy and contemplative cynicism through the artist’s keen understanding of human expression, emotion, and body language.

The pieces are created through layers of intricately applied oil paint, a slow drying medium which allows Swan to continuously work back into his paintings, moulding and mediating his subjects like a sculptor working with clay. The artist feels more akin to a draughtsman or sculptor than a painter; his practise is physical and active, involving carving, etching, and drawing into his paintings. Careful mark-making imbues the portraits with texture and form, evocative of animal fur, human hair, wrinkled skin, and creased fabric. Soft backgrounds of lilac, pink and pale blue bring a lightness to Swan’s works, offsetting the capricious characters of his subjects.

Dogs, deities, and rabbits are recurrent motifs of this collection, speaking to the artist’s interest in folklore, mythology, and ancient Egyptian gods. The artist frequently tries to depict animalistic traits in his characters, drawing profound parallels between man and beast within his work. Despite their menacing first impression, Swan’s subjects are creatures of human depth and emotion that, like Glasgow, need patience and time to be understood.



Stewart Swan, Half Nelson Horus, 2023,
Oil on Antique Paper, 104 x 71 cm



Stewart Swan, Baltic Smoke, 2023
Oil on Unstretched Canvas, 104 x 81 cm

For interview and press enquiries, email info@rhodesontemporaryart.com

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