

Wyer Gallery



Matthew Murphy An American Werewolf in London

Exhibition: 19th June – 19th July 2008

Private View: 18th June 2008

Private View Wednesday 18th June, 18.30 – 20.30

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10 am to 6 pm Tuesday - Friday,
11 am - 5 pm Saturday

For his second solo show at Wyer, *An American Werewolf in London*, Matthew Murphy presents a new series of watercolours and works in oil on canvas.

Murphy's oils, painted in a somber palette of murky browns, reds and greens, are hallucinatory compositions that use an expanding lexicon of images - gemstones, cigarettes, eyeballs and glass bottles - to depict impossibly strange or bug-eyed, anthropomorphic figures. They mix a cartoonish figuration, which calls to mind the works of Philip Guston or George Condo, with often morose or annihilistic overtones (paintings bear titles such as *Drinking to forget that my Body is in Athens and my Head in London*, *Hangover*, *Ride of the Valkeries* and *Insomnia*) and, drawing on the artist's science background, their ostensibly jokey front masks a more pessimistic concern with issues of transformation: the mutation of cells or the metamorphosis of body parts. Eyeballs, for instance, bloodshot for the most part, seem distressingly to morph into other body parts or, painted in number, seem to represent molecular compositions or, more pertinently perhaps as it relates to identity, strands of DNA.

His watercolours, painted rapidly and intuitively in loose washes, are more colourful than his oils but they use an intense and oversaturated palette, exploiting a cartoony imagery that borders on the grotesque as they build on Murphy's thoughts about mutation, change and alteration. In his collaged pieces, exhibited for the first time, his ideas discover physical conclusions, where Murphy salvages or harvests the more successful parts of failed works and marries them to fashion a single more successful image, be it a face with four eyes seen in disturbing double vision or a torso-less depiction of a Neanderthal like figure. Playful or sinister as they may be, the interactions of his collaged juxtapositions explore a duplication and repetition that mirrors the reiterated patterns found in human biology. And while Murphy's cartooning seems to be a way of dealing with this physical world at hand, what he ultimately seems to create is a purely imaginary alternative one, be it a dystopian scene at times more alarming than our present reality.

Canadian artist, Matthew Murphy graduated from the University of Toronto and, more recently, the Slade School of Art. Now based in London, he has exhibited throughout the UK, most recently in Kenny Schachter ROVE Projects', *Through a Glass Darkly* and his work is in private collections across Canada and the UK. *An American Werewolf in London*, his second solo show, follows *Exile and the Kingdom* in 2006. The exhibition opens with a private view on 18th June 2008.

A catalogue of works is available on request - please contact the gallery.
For further enquiries and images contact Jane Wyer +44 (0)20 7223 8433