

Thomas Houseago
One Beautiful Day
The Modern Institute, Aird's Lane
25th November – 20th January 2023
Preview: Friday 24th November 2023, 6-8pm

One Beautiful Day marks the return of Thomas Houseago to Scotland and showcases the range and elegance of his new large-scale paintings. These convey a uncynical sensitivity to the natural world, building on the drawing that has always been a cornerstone of his work. Meditation informed the visions that ground them, bringing creativity and landscape into an affective dialogue. And while the pieces are sizable, they operate at a compelling intersection between the unguarded or introspective, and the bold.

The paintings occupy the Aird's Lane space. Their attention to qualities of light, celestial bodies and plant life underscores the restorative power of nature. Often a tranquil sea is depicted suffused with colourful light and the scenes gesture towards new horizons, both literally and figuratively. Drawn elements, often found on flat portions of plaster or Tuf-Cal in previous pieces, are here elaborated and expanded into vast fields of colour. Each one demonstrates Houseago's interest in contour, line and silhouette, as well as his ability to shift scale from the miniature to the cinematic. Houseago painted them in an open-air studio in Malibu, California. They depict moments of looking and reflecting – of receptivity. In an extension of this openness, they even incorporate passing detritus from their immediate environment – sand, dust, leaves and petals.

Only a lone owl, entitled *Mystery Owl (Amani)*, occupies the Bricks Space. It is rendered in Houseago's classic redwood – a material deeply associated with his adopted home of California. The form nods to ideas of wisdom, originating in Greek mythology where the owl either accompanies or represents Athena, the goddess of wisdom. This contemplative symbol sets up a dynamic relationship to the immediately of encounter portrayed in the paintings in the adjacent space.

The title of the exhibition speaks to a thematic engagement with art making and the passing of time. Collectively the works take us from dawn to dusk, from first light to the nighttime vigilance of owls. The show is accompanied by a newly commissioned essay by Ross Birrell held within a book containing a series of drawings, notes, pictures and song titles collected by Houseago while working in the studio.

Solo exhibitions include 'LOVERS', TANK Shanghai, Shanghai, China (2023); 'WE', Sara Hildén Art Museum, Tampere, Finland (2022); 'Vision Paintings', Royal Museums of Fine Arts of Belgium, Brussels (2021); Royal Academy, London (2019); 'Almost Human', Musée d'Art Moderne de la Ville de Paris (2019); 'Lovers', Academie Conti, Vosne-Romanée, France (2015); 'Studies '98-'14', Gemeentemuseum Den Haag, Netherlands (2014); 'As I Went Out One Morning', Storm King Art Center, Cornwall, New York (2013); 'Striding Figure/Standing Figure', Galleria Borghese, Rome (2013); 'Where the Wild Things Are and Hermaphrodite', Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts, Norwich, England (2012); 'The World Belongs to You', Palazzo Grassi, Venice (2011); 'Beat of the Show', Inverleith House, Edinburgh, Scotland (2011); 'Amy Bessone and Thomas Houseago', Rennie Museum, Vancouver, Canada (2010); 'What Went Down', Modern Art Oxford, England (2010, travelled to Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, England; Museum Abteiberg, Monchengladbach, Germany; and Centre International d'Art et du Paysage de l'Île de Vassivière, Beaumont-du-Lac, France, through 2011); 'The Artist's Museum', Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles (2010); 'There's a Crack in Everything, That's How the Light Gets In', Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin (2009); 'A Million Miles Away', Modern Institute, Glasgow (2007); 'I Am Here, Selected Sculptures 1995–2003', Stedelijk Museum voor Actuele Kunst, Ghent, Belgium (2003); Stedelijk Museum Bureau, Amsterdam (1996).