

GEORGE ROWLETT

A Given Glory - George Rowlett's Flower Paintings

Courtesy Art Space Gallery, London

23 June - 28 July 2012

Private View Friday 22 June 7-9pm

"I always take a five-litre tin of Stokes Titanium white, two and a half of Bright Red, two and a half of Chrome Lemon and the same of Spectrum Ultramarine..." This was George Rowlett in 2004 telling John Lessore about the nuts and bolts of his painting. That interview gave a refreshing, insider's view of an artist who is so devoted to his work that he rises at 5am and paints every day.

Whether East Kent landscapes, the River Thames, the Alps, his telling self portraits - or as here, of flowers - George Rowlett's images are passionate responses to the ever-changing quality of light. Painting with brushes made him too facile, he says, so now he uses broad palette knives, spatulas and his fingers, forcing himself to look, think, and look again before plastering the surface with impasto. When in London, he likes to paint the Thames, attracted "by the river's mythologies, its smells, its decay and regeneration".

George Rowlett's flower paintings are often of specific species. They are always seen close to, either in vases or rioting in his garden - Honeymoon & Lavon lilies, Lilium Minorca, Geranium Psyllostemon, Rose 'Danse du Feu', rose pink Perpetue, the opium poppies and Jerusalem Sage. There are hyacinths, hydrangeas, daffodils, tulips, and recently, *Two Pots of January Flowers*.

With some of his paintings, the surfaces are so thick and chaotic that you have to stand back in order to 'get' what they are. That's when you see the structure under the skin.

Ties of affection bring the images to life in another way: the series *Marion's Sweet Peas* refers to his wife and his 19th century walled garden. Being up close and personal to his subjects has other advantages: happy accidents can change everything, as in the thrush which arrived at the last minute in Lilies Honeymoon & Lavon, *Young Thrush on a Bench, Walmer* (2009), and the butterfly which tipped the balance for *Lilium Minorca, Nine Opium Poppies and Meadow Brown* (2010). George Rowlett's devotion to four simple colours has relented only once, when he introduced Alizarin Crimson to honour his father-in-law. He was "a joyous person... [and] it was in his spirit". It could be his own epitaph.

Caroline Juler, art critic & Wales correspondent for Galleries magazine



Pale Daffodils, white jug, black curtain oil on board 18 x 12 ins



Marion's Sweetpeas, Morning Light oil on board 48 x 24 ins



Deal Tulips and Herrings oil on board 36 x 24 ins



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