



Tom Worsfold
Good Fats
Jan 15th - Feb 18th

In *Good Fats*, Tom Worsfold continues to create his unsettling landscapes, or “diagrams” as he calls them, each painting full of disparate elements and surprising connections. In fact, the images here would seem to be more portraits than landscapes, since their starting point is often a human torso: a cue to investigate the languages of self-optimisation and self-care, and certain aspects of queer culture, which remain fiercely current in 2022. And yet in their broad sweep, thrilling detail and latent narrative possibilities, they make the case to be landscapes too - if only of Worsfold’s mind.

Scrutinise these scenes, each painted in a vivid, unrepentant acrylic, and you will see bits of everyday life reconfigured. In *Anthocyanin Scarf*, a deliciously camp purple foulard is reimagined as somebody’s guts; the name, like the shade, nods to blueberries and their apparently all-conquering superfood properties. The torso in *To Do* is built up of Post-It notes, probably laid out to remind you of all those things you should do to “be better”. In *Battery Pack*, a man’s abdominals are rendered as AA Duracells and his head has become a gleaming lightbulb, the whole thing a subliminal order to #PowerUp and #KickAss such as you are given on Instagram every day (in a possible nod to the shakiness behind this relentless enterprise, however, the pecs are rendered as plasters). Finally, *Bumbags* decides that the abs are actually said pouches stuffed with nuts (another virtuous superfood), while the pecs become two big toothy mouths rendered in a luscious pink. The effect is both ominous and glamorous. If Worsfold is, throughout these paintings - which he views as all pages from the same “book” - exposing a type of angst, it’s by no means just a trenchant critique. There’s also tenderness, curiosity and wit.

For the artist, now in his early thirties, this is the result of a lifetime spent pondering, criticising and often “improving” the body; it’s also the consequence of having largely done this via smartphone, computers and the internet, just as many others have today. Again though, if there’s scepticism, there’s no reactionary disdain: more a curiosity for what it means and where it can go. In much contemporary discourse – in gay or queer culture especially -- the sense recurs that the body can be turned into an optimised machine, brilliantly perfected for selfies, Crossfit classes and fucking. The torso in particular has always had a certain currency, both in daily life and the history of art: where would we be without the *Dying Slave*, without David? Or, for that matter, Tom Bianchi or Tom of Finland?

In each composition Worsfold uses the human core as a grid off which he can bounce various ideas. He has no set narrative in mind, but is willing to see where his assemblage takes him – and us. Even as these figures can seem abstracted and dissected – rigged up as unholy machines – the human is clearly there. Note the attentive hands reappearing throughout. Are they prodding and tweaking? Or are they, amid all the confusion of contemporary life, just signs of sympathy and care?

Text by Louis Wise

Tom Worsfold (b. 1990, Cambridge) is an artist based in London. Worsfold studied at the Royal Academy Schools and the Slade School of Fine Art and has exhibited widely across the UK and internationally. Recent exhibitions include: Block 336, MAMOTH, Castor Projects, Carlos/Ishikawa, Recent Activity and more.

Works (from left to right):

Online, 2022
Acrylic on canvas
46 x 35 cm

To Do, 2022
Acrylic on canvas
46 x 35 cm

Anthocyanin Scarf, 2022
Acrylic on canvas
46 x 35 cm

Battery Pack, 2022
Acrylic on canvas
46 x 35 cm

Bumbags, 2022
Acrylic on canvas
46 x 35 cm