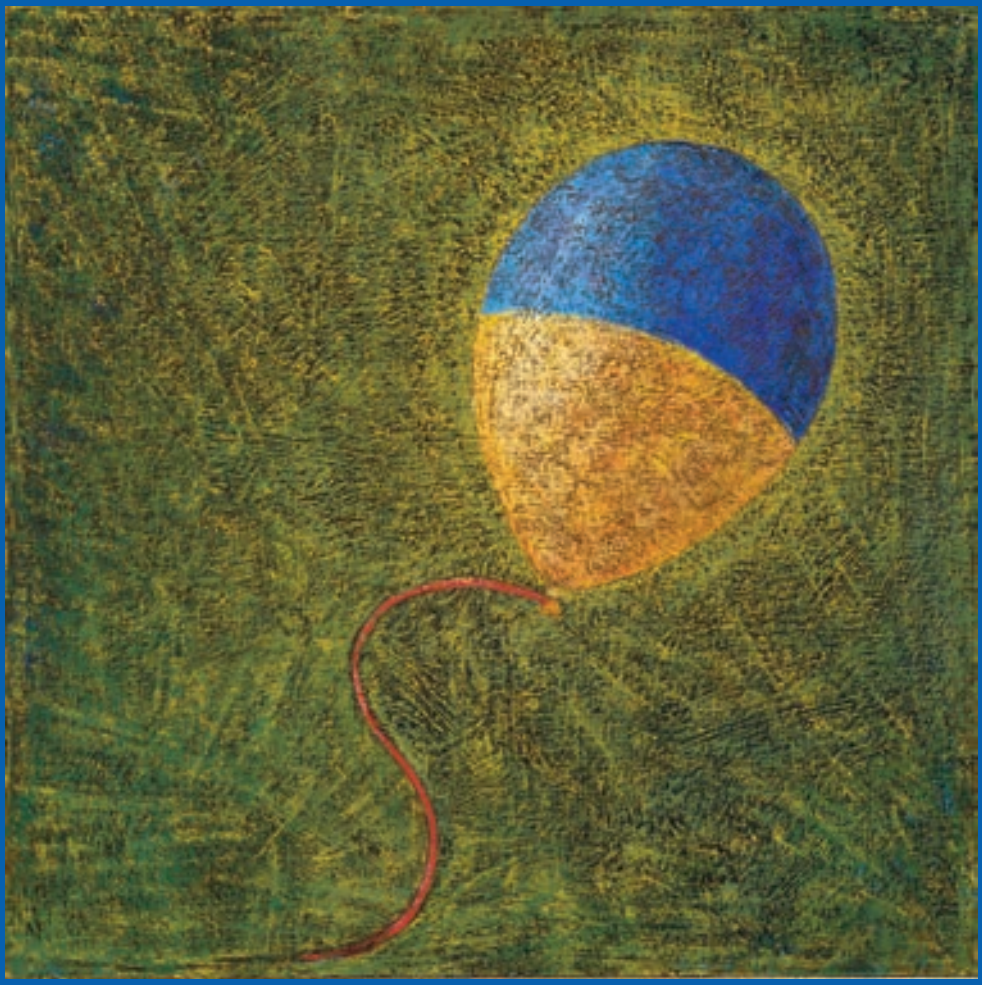
LOOK OUT



JAMES DODDS

5th December 2026 to 10th January 2027

JAMES DODDS

LOOK OUT

You are invited to the Exhibition Opening Day
Saturday 5th December 2026, noon to 5pm

Refreshments served

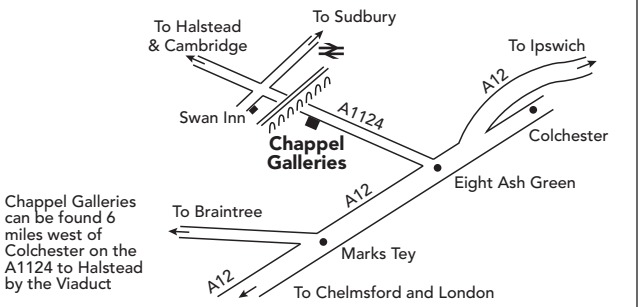
All works by James Dodds reproduced in this booklet refer to the exhibition and are for sale at Chappel Galleries
The artist will donate his share from sales to the UN World Food Program

Opening times for this exhibition:
Wednesday to Sunday 10am to 5pm or by appointment

Exhibition continues to Sunday 10th January 2027
Closed 25th December 2026 reopen 2nd January 2027

Chappel Galleries, Colchester Road, Chappel, Essex CO6 2DE
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Additional parking at Swan Inn



CHAPPEL GALLERIES
FINE ART

Front cover: **Ukraine Balloon** | oil on linen | 2022 | 90 x 90cm

The Russian invasion into Ukraine 24th February 2022.



Fable | oil on linen | 2023-26 | 90 x 90cm

The Ouroboros, the snake that surrounds the world that normally bites its own tail signifying the circle of life with a double DNA helix of barbed wire. It is distracted by an apple from the tree of knowledge. I wonder, if Adam and Eve had eaten the fruit from the other tree, the tree of life, with leaves that were said to have the power to end wars, we would value wisdom more than knowledge.

The Angel's Eye

For some, James Dodds' *Look Out* paintings might represent something of a departure. After all, his beautiful linocuts of little ports have a discernible tranquillity, and his paintings of boats are filled with an almost entrancing, numinous and meditative quality. This seems very far from the life of a refugee trying to survive in one of the 'small boats' so maligned by successive UK governments, or from the early, anxious days of the Covid pandemic, from war and devastation – from the dark subjects and the implicit dismay in the use of paint and colour in the *Look Out* works.

But Dodds' work has always looked out. Those linocuts aren't as tranquil as they first seem. Examine the water and you will notice a seaman's keen awareness of currents always shifting beneath the surface. Examine the perspective and you will see a disorientating presentation of land from a sea's eye view – the perspective of the incoming stranger, of the changed traveller returning to an altered home, of the creatures we over-exploit, poison and choke, and of the sea itself: so long abused and now a warming, rising threat. Examine Dodds' boats which hang so strangely in clouds of light. They are both accurately presented vernacular craft and spiritual statements about the value in skills, humility before the sea and before the demands and limits of the artist's materials. Here is hard-won beauty, living tradition, and the meeting of mankind and living waters. Here is something like an angel's eye view – it sees the small boat that might carry us off to challenging but better places, that might navigate routes or renewal for mind, spirit, body. All Dodds' work looks out, sees when we and our culture are so often depressingly blind to each other, to the qualities and wonders of our environment, of honest and useful objects and the brighter possibilities still there for our species if we are brave and loving enough to grasp them.

If we remember Dodds' key early work showing a man and an angel locked in conflict, if we remember a life's quietly passionate creation, then the Look Out paintings make perfect sense Here, an artist mourns an incoming tide of cruelty, the loss of leaving the EU and a global shift towards inhumanity. He answers darkness as a true artist always does – with light. These are paintings which demand that we see the world's wrongs and address them. These are paintings that offer compassion to those who so often find none. These are paintings which ask us, over and over – *Why? Why don't we do better? Why don't we help more? Why don't we acknowledge the storm we are all inside and turn into gentler places, ones where we might survive?*

In a time when passion and compassion are mocked and stifled, or weaponised and manipulated into hate, these paintings are an act of solidarity, an acknowledgement of grief and a call to sane and humane action. I am grateful for them.

AL Kennedy
writer and broadcaster



EU Life Belt | oil on linen | 2016 | 90 x 90cm

The first time I voted was in 1975. My vote was to join the European Union.

Foreword

I studied painting at the Royal College of Art, 1981-84, where perhaps mistakenly I thought it was my duty to confront the big issues. I remember working on a big painting during the Falklands war, every morning striking more and more ships off, trying to express my dark fascination and the horror of being at war. This painting was far too ambitious and never got finished. I discovered how hard it is to process events into paintings as they are happening. I now know art's social role is far subtler and broader.

The art school paintings I feel happy with are where subjects had been pre-edited by others, like the *Solidarność* triptych painted in response to two Polish films about the Gdansk shipyard occupation. Another painting was *Carpenter Wrestling with an Angel*, a biblical subject concerning the struggle that artists have long identified with when wrestling with ideas and materials. Both subjects had been honed by the retelling. Old stories and myths are always open for reinterpretation, to show relevance to the present day.

After leaving college my subject matter increasingly looked inwards, trying to resolve my personal problems. This very quickly became depressing. Working on your own after the camaraderie of college takes some getting used to. It was only when I had the offer of a big venue, that - partly in desperation - I drew on my experience in boatbuilding and painted a big blue boat over the top of a particularly problematic painting. Painting then became enjoyable again and this set my course for the next 25 years.

However, every now and then I would look out and paint directly from some current event, painting about something that disturbed me. Then the black dog would get hold of me and I would return to painting boats. For me boats represent salvation, hope and community with a social message and above all they are enjoyable to paint. They bring my boatbuilder and artistic lives together. (*Life Boat* was the title of my last Chappel Galleries one-man show). Hopefully the boat paintings offer the viewer the same calm and comfort they give me painting them

Early *Look Out* paintings were *DNA* (2000) : the rusty iron spiral from a barbed-wire fence used in the First World War trenches, suggesting that war is part of our *DNA*; a *House of Monopoly Cards* (2008) about subprime mortgage crisis; and The shock of leaving the EU with a *EU Life Belt* floating away (2016). With the climate crisis needing collaboration to resolve, I felt this is not the time for isolationism.

After visiting the USA for my exhibitions in Rockland, Maine 2010 and 2017, I witnessed small town Independence Day parades which increasingly displayed guns, military flags and hardware. This was the beginning of these Look Out paintings. With the benefit of age I seem to be able to respond more immediately to disturbing events.

James Dodds



Black and White | oil on linen | 2017 | 95 x 95cm

This series of square Lookout paintings started after a visit to a small town in Maine during the 4th of July parade in 2017. I was surprised at a number of pickup trucks with mounted machine guns flying a Black and White stars and stripes. I felt compelled to respond with a painting to what seemed to be a heavily-armed and polarised country (I was also shocked to see *Mein Kampf* prominently displayed in the same small-town library).



Cladding | oil on linen | 2017 | 95 x 95cm

The same year in the UK we witnessed on television the horrific fire in the high rise council flats. The cosmetic cladding had been made from a flammable material. The 24-storey Grenfell Tower inhabitants were initially advised to stay in their rooms. The inquiry into who was to blame for 72 deaths concluded 6 years later with a 1,700 page report, perhaps another form of cladding. The money would have been better spent compensating the families affected and upgrading fire escapes and installing sprinklers in all high-rise buildings.



Covid Mine | oil on linen | 2022 | 95 x 95cm

In 2019 covid struck. An image of sea mines popped up on my online feed, and I made a connection with images of the virus: half virus, half sea mine. Mankind's part in the virus coming into being is debatable but it certainly would not exist without us!



Refugee Boat | oil on linen | 2022 | 95 x 95cm

A sinking Mediterranean refugee boat, the type of boat that has changed little from the dawn of civilisation. It is hard to know how many thousands of people have lost their lives crossing the Mediterranean. One list shows over 26,000 recorded deaths in the last ten years, plus another 12,000 people who have disappeared.



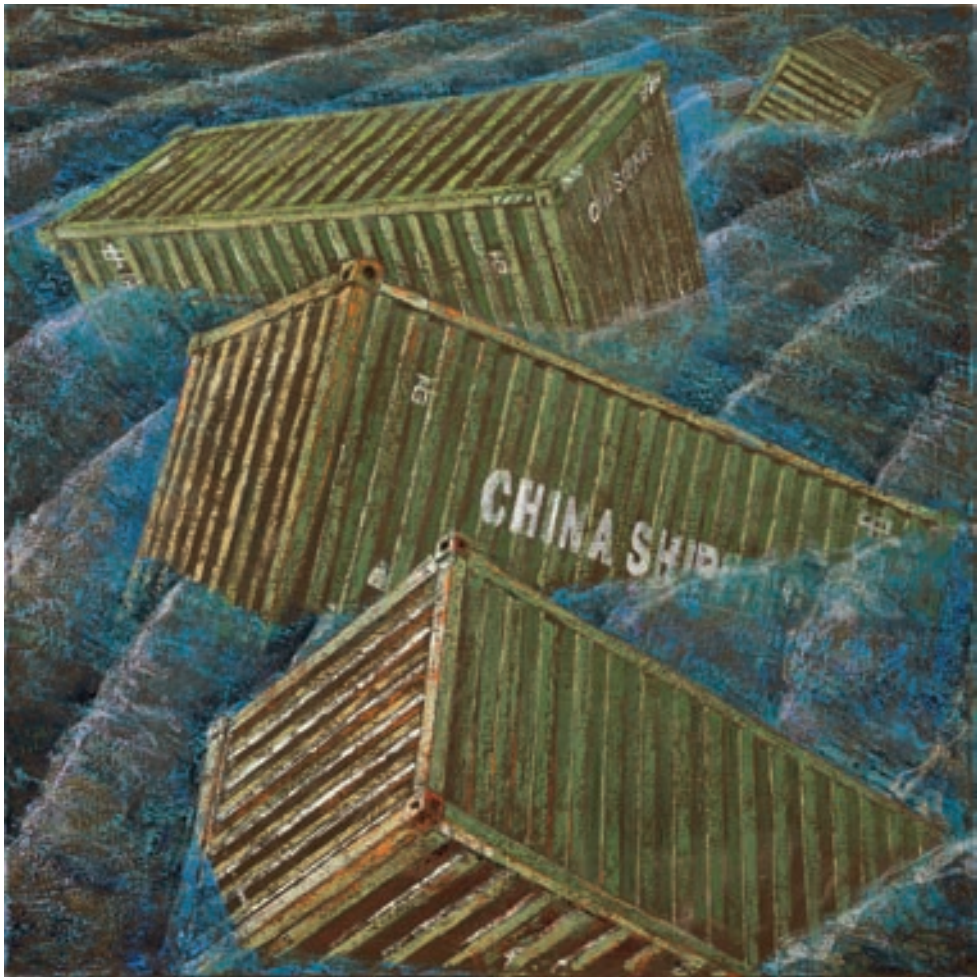
Privilege | oil on linen | 2023 | 90 x 95cm

A rubber dinghy pulled up on an English beach used to cross the channel. *Privilege* was the name of the private airline first employed to return refugees. People forced to flee from climate change, ethnic persecution and war. Globally, an estimated 117.8 million people were forcibly displaced from their homes by the end of December 2025, according to the UNHCR.



Containers | oil on linen | 2022 | 95 x 95cm

The mountain of empty containers I saw in December 2021 on an old airfield in Suffolk, caused by logistical problems at Felixstowe container port, due to the pandemic. A giant monolith, 75ft high.



Adrift | oil on linen | 2023 | 90 x 90cm

Global supply chain at sea, representing the fragility of the global trade.



Oil Whale | oil on linen | 2022 | 90 x 90cm

The 1978 wrecked oil tanker *Amoco Cadiz*, I remember from my childhood. The bow section remained afloat for many years, the anchor chain carving the striations on its bulbous bow like that of a blue whale's throat. More recently in 2021 another ship *X-Press Pearl* caught fire, eventually sinking, and releasing billions of microplastic beads causing an environmental disaster. The plastic beads have now entered the food chain. From this and other accidents we all now have microplastics in our bodies.



Spirit of Britain | oil on linen | 2022 | 90 x 95cm

2022. We saw the shocking behaviour of P&O re-registering the Dover-Calais ferry to Cyprus so that they could sack 800 skilled seamen and re-employ cheap untrained staff. The irony was that one of the P&O ships involved was called the *Spirit of Britain*. It seemed to sum up the Tory government's relentless drive to sell off our national assets, from the utilities of the NHS to railways and infrastructure, shifting the wealth of the country into private and foreign hands. The last thing to be sold will be the actual spirit of Britain.



Shadow of a Sea Fort (Fortress state)
oil on linen | 2023 | 90 x 90cm

The navy sea forts were part of Britain's air defences in the Second World War. I remember, when sailing across the Thames Estuary, the sea fort on the Knock John sandbank appearing out of the fog, still with an aircraft gun in place, seaweed hanging from its barrel. Another identical sea fort is off Clacton, the Rough Towers, later renamed *Sealand*, which declared itself an independent principality in the 60s, perhaps summing up the absurdity of the isolationist Little Britain's mindset.



Mask party | oil on linen | 2023 | 90 x 90cm

Is about the PPI and face mask scandal during COVID, about the Tory government's disregard of the rules, paying vast sums to Tory party funding mates to supply PPI, bypassing the procurement rules, and gagging the nation through fear and confusion. Neoliberal pirates benefiting from disasters, consolidating their wealth and resources. Betting - hedging, rather than investing to prevent the disaster.



Equals | oil on linen | 2024 | 90 x 90cm

My umbrella is decorated with the symbols of the world's currencies, which often incorporate the equals (=) symbol. An umbrella sometimes symbolizes money, and financial protection against unexpected. This bitter-sweet image is from a newspaper photograph of a young person up to their neck in flood water, holding an umbrella over their head to keep dry! The distribution of wealth has never been equal but the inequality between the super-rich and the poor is increasing. Oxfam reported in 2024 that the number of billionaires rose to 2,769. Their combined wealth surged from $13 trillion to $15 trillion in just 12 months giving this small group even more control of the world's resources.



Metal Shop Shutter | oil on linen | 2023 | 90 x 90cm

Was next, with a divided quarter of the United Kingdom's Union Jack. We are a 'country of shopkeepers' who have now pulled down the shutters on Little Britain. Post-Brexit, we are closed for business.



Golden Bull | oil on linen | 2023 | 90 x 90cm

An Israeli armoured bulldozer flattening homes and ripping up the infrastructure. Up to the year 2022 over 55,000 Palestinian buildings were demolished and since them half the buildings in Gaza and another 2,000 buildings in the West Bank according to The Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions. A form of punishment first used by the British in Palestine. In the sky a drone and the poet Refaat Alareer's white kite of Gaza. Since painting this the whole of Gaza and part of Lebanon have been flattened!

The golden idol of bull calf so angered Moses into breaking the Ten Commandments and loosing the Levites to massacre thousands of his own followers (40,000: the same number killed in Gaza when I painted this, now so many more innocent lives have been lost). The prophet Moses is common to the sons of Abraham: the Christian, Jew and Muslim, as is the temple on the mount in Jerusalem.



Pager Bomb | oil on linen | 2024 | 90 x 90cm

A particularly nasty technology bomb. I have renamed the pager after the classic god of war instead of the messenger of the gods. With the time-weary message of revenge and an eye for an eye, that just perpetuates war. The Big Brother eyes look a little like the spools of a music cassette, reminding me of the booby-trapped Walkman bombs used during the last days of Apartheid in South Africa.

Does it have to be that the atrocities of the Twin Towers and Re'im massacre, or some historical claim or doctrine, are used to justify the deaths of so many innocent families? Revenge is not a solution; an eye for an eye has never solved a problem. The bombing of the utilities essential for civilisation - electricity and water, shops, schools, hospitals and homes - remotely from the sky, will not solve the problem. Those that are lucky enough to survive become the long-term casualties and a world problem. At the last count there are over 10 million displaced people.



AI Assassin | oil on linen | 2025 | 90 x 90cm

An armed hexicopter drone. If the face recognition fits an algorithm, it kills without human intervention or trial. Since this book was first printed Google's parent company Alphabet has decided to disregard the requirement for human control of robotic killing machines (February 2025). With the wars in Ukraine and Gaza, drones have become increasingly used not only against tanks and soldiers but also against infrastructure, homes and individuals. We are at the most dangerous cusp of giving autonomous drones the freedom to decide between life and death.

A year after painting this image AI advised the US bombers that a school full of children was a military target.



One State | oil on linen | 2024 | 90 x 90cm

Combined Palestinian and Israeli flags. Hopefully one day both peoples will be able live together in peace. The Holy Land has been a battle ground for centuries. What a beacon of hope it would be if the three Abrahamic faiths, who have so much in common, could live in peace.

If the human race has any hope we have to do things differently, learn how to live peacefully with each other - sharing the world's resources in a sustainable and equal way. We are all in the same boat on our one planet.



Burning Olive Tree | oil on linen | 2026 | 90 x 90cm

To me sums up all that is going wrong with the world, from the global forest fires of the changing climate to the destruction of hope for the Palestine and Israeli peoples.

It is our selfishness and greed that have caused the climate change crises, which is the reason wars are fought for world-limited resources, resulting in famine and a refugee crises.



Outsourcing, Sold Down the River
oil on linen | 2025 | 90 x 90cm

The scandal of our government outsourcing its responsibilities for parenting children taken by the state into care. The private companies chosen to take on this responsibility make a profit on each child, some as much as 30%. These children are often looked after in unregulated and poorly-supervised places all over the county, often far away from their roots. The cost per child is higher than private boarding school fees. The government is failing these young people, while wealth funds are profiting from tax payer's money that should be spent in looking after these vulnerable children.



Topsy Turvy | oil on linen | 2025 | 90 x 90cm

Putin and Trump. The rise of the oligarch. The discarding of old alliances, stability and morality in favour of accumulation of power and wealth. On November 5th 2024 we had the US election. The painting is divided into the three areas of the flag of the Russian Federation with the 50 state stars from the United States' flag: The top third represents the Americans that were registered to vote and did not. Just under 40% of North America's population are not registered to vote. The central area portrays the aspirational stars representing 23 Democratic states. The lower third shows the 27 Republican states. The stars replaced with the Dollar symbol. I am concerned how Russian money can distort an American election. Ted Allbeury's *The Twentieth Day of January* is an espionage thriller published in 1980 about a Soviet-backed US president-elect. The novel predicted the vulnerability in the US electoral system. I feel money should not be king. In the coming mid-term election Trump is offering a voting bribe,(supposably not a bribe when it's an election promise!). 'Our only real hope for democracy is that we get the money out of politics entirely and establish a system of publicly funded elections'. (Noam Chomsky)



Trump Tower | oil on linen | 2025 | 90 x 90cm

A spiral building reminiscent of the Babel Tower where communication and language has become unintelligible at its summit (fake news). Trump is shown building a wall of money around himself. Balanced on the upper walls of gold bars are bitcoins, the next tier down is a wall of bank notes, then the concrete slabs that divide countries and communities, the lowest wall is of castles and forts. In the sky is his gift from the Qatari royal family: a $400 millon jumbo jet. Years ago I painted a man building castle walls round himself which was inspired by a play based on a Franz Kafka unfinished novel *The Castle*.



Mother and Child | oil on linen | 2025 | 90 x 90cm

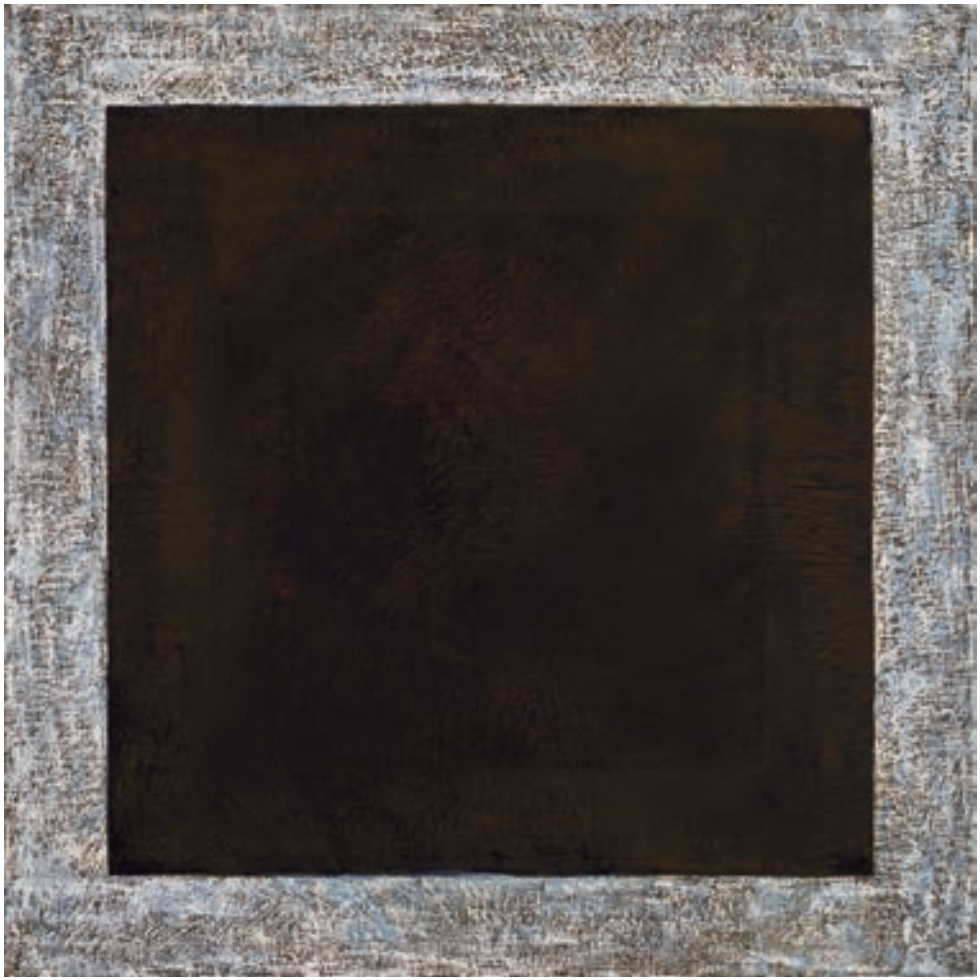
The Israeli genocide in Gaza using European and American bombs.

Bombs raining down on a Palestinian tent, within the symbol of the alchemists' folly of turning base metal into gold, perhaps representing the dream of turning a refugee's son into a son of God. The same Abrahamic God.



End of the Road | oil on linen | 2025 | 90 x 90cm

The traffic sign for a no through road. The end of days. The end of the road for civilisation. Or simply just 'T' for Trump. Or tyranny.



‘I can’t breathe’ (black square and a broken window)
oil on linen | 2026 | 90 x 90cm

The black square primarily refers to the social media movement that gained prominence after the murder of George Floyd by an American policeman in May 2020. But it is also my homage to the Ukrainian painter Kazimir Malevich who in 1915 painted Black Square, which must have had a profound influence on the American minimalism Mark Rothko. Malevich stated that the painting was intended as ‘a desperate struggle to free art from the ballast of the objective world’ by focusing solely on form in order to access pure feelings and spirituality. I feel it is deeply ironic that this painting was found blocking a broken window. Somehow in my mind this sums up the failure of revolution in freeing (the open broken window) the Russian people. Like the futility of combatting police violence with violence, it is better to protest and remember with a black square. Perhaps another irony is that the freedom of social media is becoming the means of control and oppression.



Red Line (Gulf in America) | oil on linen | 2026 | 90 x 90cm

Following on from the black square painting. The rune-like typeface of the SS, which started as Hitler's personal body guard established in 1925. ICE was formed in 2002 by George W Bush after 9/11. Trump has used ICE to stir up racial divisions as he attempted to suffocate opposition to his white supremest plans for America. A red line has been crossed.



Baggage | oil on linen | 2026 | 90 x 90cm

A stack of old suitcases and trunks. An accumulation of family history and dreams and disappointments.

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