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# Edge of Dark

We shine a light on a thought-provoking new  
exhibition at Tremenheere Gallery

Words by Mercedes Smith



**Mercedes Smith** shines a light on a thought-provoking new exhibition

**C**ould an art show be more timely than this? At a moment when cultural, political and ecological narratives are reaching fever pitch, as coronavirus brings the world to its knees, religious ideologies clash and issues of race and equality gain momentum, Tremeneere Gallery presents *Edge of Dark*, an exhibition exploring the emo-

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tion of the times we live in, the richness and pleasure of light and dark in our world and the perils of living on the edge.

Curated by artist Jesse Leroy Smith with more than 60 works by the Newlyn Society of Artists, the show includes paintings, drawings, sculptures and installations in genres such as film noir, surrealism and tenebrism, where subjects are engulfed in shadow or dramatically il-

**Above,  
Book 5: The  
Blue Box by  
Ashley  
Hanson**

luminated by light. Historically, artists such as Caravaggio, Goya and Munch have reflected literal and metaphorical ideas of darkness in their work, exploring subjects such as passion and love, moral corruption, violence, war, angst and fear, and similarly NSA members have been invited to consider themes around *Edge of Dark* in whatever way they choose.

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Some have produced work which is abstract in nature, exploring line, colour, shape, light and shadow.

Some have been more figurative, exploring edge and tone in the landscape and in natural forms, while others have considered the challenges that face society in these turbulent times.

"*Edge of Dark* is not about polarities, but about making creative space to explore the much more interesting complexities of our shared world," said artist and current NSA chair Yolande Armstrong.

Artist Marie-Claire Hamon agrees: "*Edge of Dark* is not a place of total darkness, or total light. It explores our existence on the edge of both tonalities, with the possibility of slipping towards one side or the other.

"There is a feeling right now that we are on the edge of a new trajectory and doing almost anything makes us question our environmental impact, for now and for future generations. We need to revolutionize our thinking."

"We are indeed on the edge of dark," said artist Volker Stox, whose paintings *Earth Divided* and *Landscape Narrative* express his environmental concerns.

"Perhaps exhibition-goers will get a sense of

**Above, *The Weight of Glories*, by Belinda Whiting; facing page, *Actaeon and the Hounds*, by Mike Newton**

that, and it will go some way towards a better world in which we all contribute to improving things for everyone."

By contrast, abstract painter Ashley Hanson has work which considers "the human condition, our capacity for good – for acts of courage and kindness, balanced by a potential for wrongdoing and evil.

"I believe most of us are inherently good, but we all cross the line at some point, through jealousy, anger or selfishness".

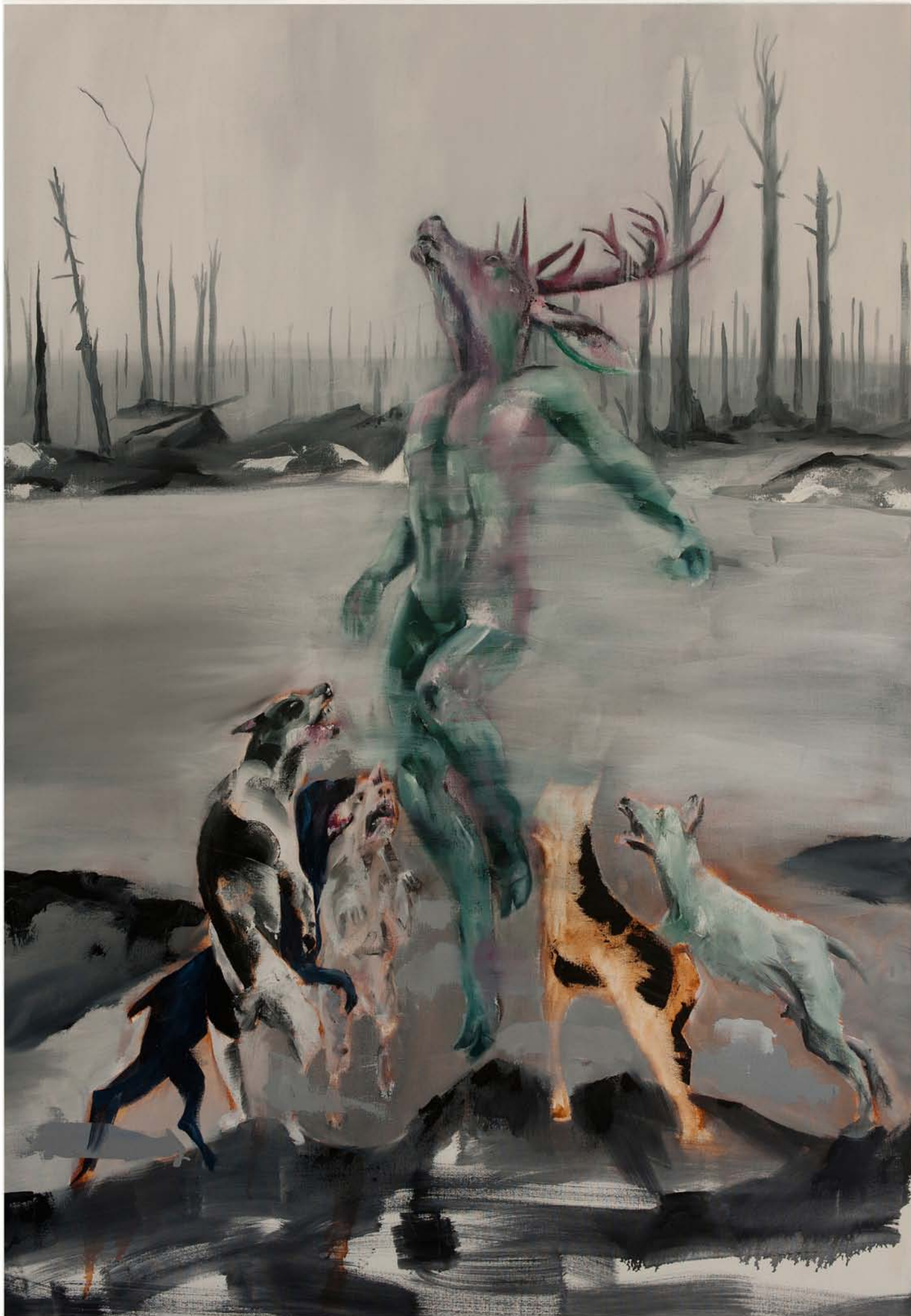
Citing the endless popularity of crime drama and fiction, an obsession he shares, he points out: "The dark side of human nature both scares and fascinates us."

Accordingly, his current series of works, titled *20 Books = 20 Paintings*, is inspired by crime novels from around the world.

He is keeping the titles of these 20 source novels a secret until this ongoing series of paintings is complete, allowing the viewer to play detective by following visual clues.

Stories of intrigue and morality are also the inspiration for artist Mike Newton's submission for the exhibition.

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His painting *Actaeon and the Hounds* draws on the narrative *Metamorphoses* by the Roman poet Ovid, in which Actaeon, out hunting with his dogs, inadvertently comes across the goddess Diana bathing naked in a woodland pool.

Diana, distraught at this intrusion upon the sanctity of her body, transforms Actaeon into a stag and he flees, but his own hunting dogs catch up with him and rip him to shreds.

“My painting resonates with themes ranging from the damage done by man to the environment, through to climate change, to a sense of the hunter becoming the hunted,” Mike explained.

“There is always a balance between light and dark – you can’t have one without the other”.

Despite the unprecedented few years our world has experienced, and the violence of emo-





**Above, *Long Holy*, by Gordon Ellis Brown; facing page, *Night View*, by Rachel Reeves; below, *No Country*, by Tim Ridley**



tion so many challenges have provoked, Ashley Hanson sees hope in the new generation “who are looking beyond themselves and are more caring and more concerned with fairness, equality and the future of our planet”.

Ingrid Newton, whose “postcard” works embody a more innocent age, agrees: “Our current problems seem increasingly insurmountable.”

“We are constantly bombarded with bad news, so it may seem that politically and environmentally adverse forces have the upper hand, but we are a resourceful species and I remain hopeful that we will find a way to improve our society and chances of survival.”

● See *Edge of Dark* from October 10 to November 1 at Tremeneheere Gallery, Tremeneheere Sculpture Gardens, Gulval, Penzance, TR20 8YL. [www.tremeneheere.co.uk](http://www.tremeneheere.co.uk) / [www.nsanewlyn.com](http://www.nsanewlyn.com)