

EMERGERS

Emily Motto & John Robertson

2 - 19 October 2025

Private View: Thursday 2nd October 18:00 - 20:00

Sculptor Emily Motto and painter John Robertson began developing works alongside each other in a shared studio in the British School at Rome in August 2024. Since then they have seen their formal languages naturally intertwine: shapes folding into one another, gestures tracing shared paths, rhythms echoing from one work to the next. The resulting works reflect this quiet collaboration, sculptural paintings and painterly sculptures that oscillate between flat and spatial encounters.

Motto works with her materials until they are just on the point of coming together (or falling apart). She searches for, or awaits, the emergence of a presence that resonates with character, poise and feeling. Her practice embraces a persistent question of what is required to make something stand, both materially and metaphorically.

Robertson employs the fundamentals of painting - line, colour, shape and volume - to investigate pictorial space. He is particularly focused on the perceptual birth of this space and abstraction's ability to flicker between flatness and depth, figure and ground. This concern extends to the relationship between the painting and the wall, which is promoted from its more usual passive role into an active player in the work's composition.

In fly fishing Emergers are types of artificial fly that imitate a hatching insect transforming from a nymph into an adult dun at the water's surface. Neither wholly of water nor air, at this point in their lifecycle the creatures are between two worlds. Unlike the real insect, the man-made flies never fully emerge, remaining at the interface, perpetually at the point of their own becoming.

Events

New Views through Abstraction

Together with Myatt Garden Primary in Lewisham, Deptford Green School in Deptford and Archbishop Tenison's CofE High School in Croydon, Motto & Robertson have been exploring new ways of looking at abstraction through a series of workshops between July – September 2025. 'Looking-Devices' have been created for the public to use, and details of the project are displayed alongside the exhibition.



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Emily Motto (b.1992, UK) graduated from the Ruskin School of Art in 2014 and was the Derek Hill Foundation Scholar in Drawing at The British School at Rome in 2017.

Motto's work has been exhibited internationally, and was featured in the *Saatchi New Sensations*, *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, and *What is the Future of Art* for the Tate Modern's reopening. Solo exhibitions include *Footnotes* at The Royal Standard, Liverpool; *Intervals* at New Local Space, Jamaica; and *Postures* at Rice+Toye, London. Motto often works collaboratively with young people to develop new works and commissions. Her work was recently shortlisted for the Royal Society of Sculptors' First Plinth Award 2025.

John Robertson (b.1983, UK) graduated from the Royal Academy Schools in 2012 and was Abbey Scholar in Painting at The British School at Rome from October 2017-June 2018.

Recent shows include *San Marco* (solo), Haricot Gallery, London; *Annunciations* (solo), Sandy Smith Studio, New York; *Ex Roma V*, A.P.T Gallery London; *All or Nothing*, Lungley Gallery; *The Garden*, Royal Academy of Arts; *The December, March and June Mostras*, British School at Rome; *Pasticcio and Mesclun*, Climax of Copenhagen, Copenhagen; *e e e o e e i a a e e a*, Rhubaba, Edinburgh.