

JOHN MURRAY | *Resurface*

14 March – 16 April 2025

The term, *resurface*, is a fitting description of John Murray's artistic process. His studio practice is governed by a creative labour that both conceals and reveals traces of the painting process. He paints in an intuitive communication with the evolving surface of a canvas, favouring the material act of making as a means of guiding the artistic outcome. Ring file stickers and tape enable him to reveal older paint layers through lifted masks, bringing the history of his process into conversation with more freshly painted surfaces.

Murray shyly admits to a sense of *horror vacui* when confronted with the blank canvas. Perhaps this is what motivates his artistic labouring. His actions as a painter become an intriguing metaphor for contemporary Consumerism that continues to make and remake the surfaces of our environments through pervasive acts of labour. In their final state the paintings could allude to peeled commercial signage, the rusted machinery of rural labour or a satellite view of human settlements. The fragments of form that Murray provides engages a game of imaginative reconnection with the objects and surfaces of one's surroundings.

Murray's imagery is unconsciously derived from the changing objects and scenes, signage, and streets of his home in South Africa. While previous works have tended towards the agricultural, this series evokes the industrial palimpsest. His surfaces tend toward the look of rusted machinery or painted metallic surfaces that peel helplessly beneath the intense rays of an African sun. Murray's forms in this exhibition seem excavated from the landscape like entropic industrial tools.

In Murray's paintings the process of how the mind connects pictorial fragments and observations recalls the darting of the eye, the saccade at the heart of how the human brain processes visual information. The resulting images on canvas are a rewiring of conventional seeing, a mapping of the unconscious scramble of visual moments. The juxtaposition of forms and surfaces in Murray's works are accumulative yet they simultaneously speak to the breaking down of a comfortable way to look at or 'see' the world around us.

- Natasha Norman, 2025