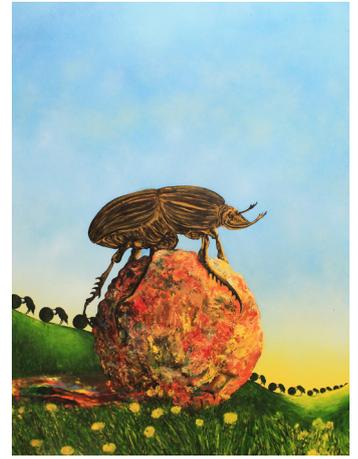


Steven Allan  
**Steady Rolling**

15 May - 10 July

Private View: Thursday 15 May, 6-9pm



BERLONI is delighted to present *Steady Rolling*, the first UK solo exhibition of Scottish born painter Steven Allan (b 1984).

The paintings in the exhibition see Allan lay his painterly cards very much on the table - largely autobiographical, the works centre mainly on the inherent struggles as a lone painter in the studio. The connection between product and its author is a profound one - Steven Allan's subjects recount the tale of the typically private foils of executing a painting and the process therein. The artist revisits his unique vision of animating the inanimate - fluro banana figures and baby geniuses visualise his ludic take on the history of what exactly it means to be an artist in a studio.

As Allan recalls "he is seen in a pratfall mode, which speaks of failure without letting."

The title work of the exhibition sees a ball of dung meticulously gathered by the militant beetle, rendered as an implosion of oil paint as if gathered from countless painters-palettes. The horizon provides the backdrop; an endless trail of identical insect minions tirelessly pushing their own ball up the land - our protagonist in the foreground seems though to ride his winnings down the hill - he smiles wryly at the viewer, as if to say that he has somehow overcome the monotony of ground-level-survival, and is maneuvering his own wave of colour into the oozing yellow sunset beyond. The smile casts an evident doubt nonetheless - one reflective of having resigned himself to the beguiled consequences of his own nature.

*The Dog House* witnesses a return from Allan's banana ego found in previous works - the more archetypal figure of paintings past though, has evolved into a more definitively realised, ultimately more human form. Domesticated in the worst sense, a prisoner of his own making, this is a gloomy, worried character, dressed against a perfect seeming sky. Springtime flowers, daffodils and daisies serve as a counterbalance between hope and despair.

A somewhat less 'evolved' offspring of the Genus Musa is later seen flaunting what appear to be sausage armbands, stood aboard a smiling disk, cast within a swirling torrent of colour. He too casts his eye at the viewer, either mortally ashamed, or perhaps unwittingly comfortable in his own waxy skin.

Within *Tempest in a Teapot* the subject is glaring out into the night, contemplating the dead space and what to fill it up with. Faced with the uncertainty of the void, he is lost, angry and weary of his trial and error.

The forlorn looks on the faces of Allan's characters seem to resonate with the evident merry go around of life, the futile behaviours we're coerced into acting out, in order to simply survive. Indubitably absurd, the woes presented in the work are all too real - in a sort of game of surreal semiotics, there are doubtless signifiers for every viewer, which evoke the very humanity from where they are inspired. What they all share though is an evident optimism, positivity in the face of adversity, reiterated through Allan's deft hand of technicolor-oil.

Ultimately, these subjects are keenly aware of their predicaments, and the humor inherent within them. They are cognizant of the viewers' judgment and indeed, are staring right back. There is a process within the painting, which deepens the superficially obvious themes the artist works with. Things are labored over, covered up, edited over time - the work remains acutely mindful of past trials - always striving to resolve itself within its own circumstance.

Steven Allan graduated from Royal College of Art (2010 - 2012, MA Painting) and Slade School of Fine Art (2005 - 2010 BA Fine Art)

He has exhibited at the Saatchi Gallery, London: *New Order - British Art Now* (2013), *Saatchi New Sensations*, London (2012); recipient of *Artist in Residence*, Ridley Scott Associates (2012), finalist in the Catlin Art Prize 2013, and has work placed both publically and privately worldwide including The Franks Suss Collection

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