



TOBY WARD

When Toby Ward was a teenager he spent the summer working for his father as an artist's studio assistant. It was a tremendous opportunity. After all, his father was the Royal Academician John Ward. So, did it inspire Toby to pursue a life of art? In a word, no.

"I resolved to never do it again," says Toby. "It made me realise that painting is really hard. In fact, I decided it would be easier to join the army."

So that's what he did, aged 19. But weirdly, his years in the military did reawaken his passion for art. Every day, officers were required to complete a diary. Toby chose to sketch, rather than write, his entries. With encouragement from his superiors, his technique and his passion for drawing blossomed.

After six years, Toby left the army to study art at City and Guilds of London art school. One might imagine this was a huge culture clash – the former officer surrounded by art school types. It was quite the opposite. "I think there's a strong crossover between art school and the army," says Toby. "They both attract people who are high energy with a low boredom threshold, self-disciplined and willing to take risks. I loved it there. I stood out only because I ironed my trousers."

On graduation, it didn't take long for Toby to become an in-demand working artist. In 1995 he spent a month working with the United Nations Peacekeeping force in central Bosnia recording the work of the soldiers. He was a Royal Tour artist, travelling with the then Prince of Wales to record his visit to the Gulf States. He later worked with the National Trust, the Royal Opera House, The Ritz Hotel and even the Tour de France. He also became a prolific portrait painter. His subjects included Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Lord Rothermere and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh.

The first outing for Toby's more personal work came in 2005, with a solo show at the Catto. His energetic and colourful paintings showed a new side to the artist, and were instantly popular with art lovers. At the same time he was artist in residence at St Martin's in the Fields and the Athenaeum Club. In 2012 He began a series of residencies and commissions firstly with Lincoln Cathedral, then Westminster Abbey where he was commissioned to record the development of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee Galleries in a series of 35 paintings and drawings. Furthermore in 2019 he became the artist in residence at the House of Lords and a further residency in 2020 with the National Trust at Chastleton House.

Now, the Catto is delighted to welcome Toby back for his long-awaited return. His paintings do not disappoint. In fact, they represent a significant evolution in his artistic journey. The new work sees Toby edge towards a semi-abstract approach, with super-realistic colour and flattened planes. According to Toby, arriving at this fresh aesthetic was not easy; it took decades.

He explains: "When I was working on the Lincoln Cathedral project I started to really enjoy the formative stage of a drawing, when it's pure line and colour. The act of turning these basic elements into something representational became less interesting to me. So when I returned to my own painting, I wanted to explore that."

He says the breakthrough came in Fish Market – a painting he started 30 years ago. "I was with the UN in Croatia, and I had this drawing of a fish market. I tried many times to develop it, but I was never happy with the result. In 2022, I went out of my comfort zone. I applied these new ideas about line and shape and colour, and suddenly it worked."

In the new collection, you can see Toby's ideas take flight. Across the exhibition, he prioritises the sensory over the representational. For example, Drawing In New England rearranges the elements of the painting – artist, easel, boats, boardwalk – into geometric schemas. And then there's Steep. Toby has painted ski scenes many times before, but never quite so boldly as in this remarkable work.

Toby Ward has enjoyed a unique and long standing career. This new solo show reveals why. 20 years after his first Catto show, he is still prepared to push boundaries and take risks.



Apple Prep, 40 x 47cm, Oil on Board





Backgammon, 98 x 108cm, Oil on Board



Fishmarket, 75 x 100cm, Oil on Board



Winter Kitchen, 98 x 68cm, Oil on Canvas





Marmalade, 61 x 61cm, Oil on Board



The Bar at The Bull, 75 x 75cm, Oil on Canvas



Skiing in the East, 54 x 52cm, Oil on Board



Steep, 76 x 51cm, Oil on Canvas





Alta Badia in Winter, 101 x 127cm, Oil on Canvas



The Alpine Swimming Club, 61 x 60cm, Oil on Board





Drawing in New England, 154 x 130cm, Oil on Canvas





Fountain II, 100 x 70cm, Oil on Board





Breakfast TV, 48 x 53cm, Oil on Canvas



Brittany Coast, 42 x 31cm, Oil on Board



Map Reading on the North West Coast, 61 x 91cm, Oil on Board



Boats on the Beach, 61 x 84cm, Oil on Board



Sainte Marine,  
100 x 64cm,  
Oil on Board



Toby Ward



Racer, 60 x 90cm, Oil on Board



Landscape in Val d'Isère, 60 x 44cm, Oil on Board





Finish Line, 60 x 60cm, Oil on Canvas

Back Cover: Wine Tasting in Seville 100 x 70cm, Oil on Canvas





# CATTO GALLERY

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Opening times: 10am - 5.30pm Mon – Sat • 12 - 5pm Sunday • and by appointment

**You are welcome to attend the Private View with Toby Ward  
on Thursday 3rd April 5.30 – 8.00pm  
Please RSVP if you would like to attend to [art@cattogallery.co.uk](mailto:art@cattogallery.co.uk).**

Exhibition Dates: 3-22 April 2025