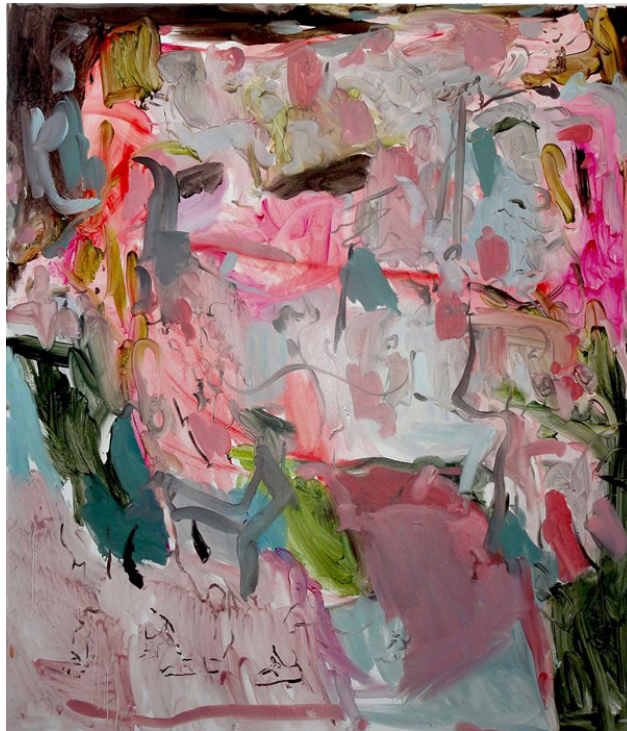


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Painter Tomo Campbell on finding beauty in imperfection

The London-born painter discusses an intersection of influences, including ballet, jazz, football, and making mistakes

A Central Saint Martins graduate, former artist-in-residence at the English National Ballet, and briefly a model for Dior, Tomo Campbell is undeniably a talented artist who doesn't strive towards perfection in his art but finds joy in its flaws. This month, his debut show *Held On The Tips Of Fingers* will be exhibited at Golborne Gallery.

The 28-year-old painter and photographer was born in Twickenham to a family of footballers, though football was never his calling. "As a kid I was always colouring in, you know, more so than most kids do. But I was never aware of it as an option in life. I used to design football kits when it was too miserable to play football."

On his painting style, Campbell doesn't like to categorise himself as it comes across as "so predetermined", but he explains that during the process, the brush strokes happen quickly, in a fast manner, and almost instinctively. "My process begins with no plan and with no aim. I just kind of work through, constantly swinging between feelings and emotions, seeing how things progress, sometimes feeling confident and sometimes feeling like it's a disaster. And I think that the balancing point between those two things is actually where the work lies. It's

why the show is called Held On The Tips Of Fingers. Like it's quite grasped but not quite dropped, just on that fragile tipping point."

Campbell takes some time to pinpoint his influences; until it suddenly dawns on him. Like his paintings, his thoughts become "activated and it all kind of fits in place".

On his influences, one particular band has shaped the way he paints. "There's this jazz band called Portico Quartet... they write these incredible pieces of music where it seems at any point it could all fall apart, and it does. It can collapse beyond anything recognisable as a song. I'd go and watch them perform and each time the songs would develop differently. It felt really organic and like the process was where the feeling was. This idea of variations and mistakes and basically just attempting to articulate feelings has become probably a really conscious influence on me."

While Campbell "used to kind of pray for something... like some kind of divine intervention", he no longer feels the need to search for a higher power as his own art informs itself and one painting leads to another. His residency at the ballet, too, has helped him to discover his creative process. Campbell draws upon the mistakes found in this different form of art, and his own way of thinking draws parallels to the flawed movement of ballerinas. "I'd see them make mistakes; the mistakes made the whole thing seem real and added a weight to what, otherwise to an outsider, can seem dull, easy and outdated. And I went away wanting that in my paintings. To not try and impress people with how good the paintings are and how proficient a painter I am, and to actually show how much struggle and real effort these things take. And they don't always work; there's a human process throughout the whole thing. There's a whole host of different feelings in them – from arrogance to cluelessness."