

# Victoria Miro Gallery

Press Release

## David Harrison

*23 March to 23 April 2005, Lower Gallery  
Private View 6.30pm to 8.30pm , Tuesday 22 March*

The Victoria Miro Gallery presents new paintings, sculptures and collages by British artist David Harrison in his first major, solo London exhibition.

Harrison is an artist attracted to the day-to-day oddities that are often overlooked by most people. His paintings are populated by fantastical characters and wildlife placed in eerie, otherworldly settings. Taking traditional subjects of landscape and myth the artist creates magical tales that are relevant to our time and make strange our relationship to the natural world. Fairy tales have been an important influence in Harrison's work from *Alice in Wonderland*, *The Master and Margarita* and Gogol's short stories to British writers such as Cowper Powys, Mervyn Peake and Henry Williamson. In all these stories, as in Harrison's paintings, the natural and supernatural go hand in hand.

Harrison's works are created on surfaces ranging from rough wooden panels to larger canvases and vary from intimate, naturalistic studies to elaborate compositions. They are unified by Harrison's approach, which combines the fantastical with the real, the magical with the everyday. His paintings often tell of man's impact on nature and of nature settling scores in elaborate twists of fortune. Surrounded by the dirt, detritus and blighted urban decay of humanity, his creatures inspire a sense of wonder and remain powerful witnesses to man's vanity and foolishness. Central to Harrison's iconography are birds which, as the artist remarks, *"prove their superiority over mankind, as we set about destroying the planet, they fly like jewel coloured fairy folk, amongst the debris of urban life, heralding sanctuary for the rest of nature to begin its clean up process. They make their home amongst us — from the spire of a gothic cathedral, under the eaves of an ancient cottage, or from the top of a giant skyscraper, amidst the shards of concrete, shooting up at jagged angles towards heaven - this is how fairy stories are born: from true magic mixed with the absurdities of life"*.

David Harrison graduated from St Martin's college in 1984 with a BA in Painting. His work is included in *Thinking the Unthinkable or Against Nature* at the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art, Sunderland from 18 February to 16 April 2005. Exhibitions in 2004 included *The Rare Bird Show*, Store Gallery London, *East End Academy*, Whitechapel Gallery London, *Collage*, Bloomberg Space, London and *Dead Bird Show*, Whitechapel Project Space, London.

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