

THOMPSON'S
LONDON — EST. 1982



JO TAYLOR

J. Taylor



The Red Track Mixed media on paper 22 x 30 inches

Thompson's Gallery would like to thank Jo for our wonderful partnership that has now spanned over 20 years. Thank you for your hard work for this exhibition and the others leading up to this year.

We would also like to thank Andrew and Anna Lisa Balding and the Kingsclere Racing Team, Philip and Sarah Hobbs and team at Sandhill Racing Stables and, Nick and Eileen Conlon Showjumping for making these majestic animals accessible to Jo.

Storm Horse
Mixed media on paper
23 x 33 inches



JO TAYLOR: LIBERATE

10 November - 26 November 2022

An invitation to attend the Private View, artist will be in attendance

Wednesday 9 October, 6pm - 8pm

RSVP to enquiries@thompsonsgallery.co.uk

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Monday to Friday: 10:00 - 18:00
Saturday: 10:30 - 17:30
Sunday: Closed

All works are for sale on receipt of this catalogue.
The entire exhibition can be viewed on line www.thompsonsgallery.co.uk

JO TAYLOR

In 1756, Lady Elizabeth Nelthorpe gave George Stubbs the tenancy of a barn in the Lincolnshire hamlet of Horkstow near Barton on Humber. For eighteen months the barn became a scene of grisly scientific investigation as Stubbs set about studying the anatomy of the horse, carefully dissecting, noting and then drawing every external and internal element of his subject from skin to skeleton. Having finished, he returned to London with his countless drawings and notes and set about making the etching plates for what would become his scientific and artistic masterpiece, *The Anatomy of the Horse*, published in 1766.

To achieve the level of detail and accuracy that is clearly visible in both the finished plates and the preparatory drawings required a process of intense looking and careful observation. In unwavering detail and with unsentimental truthfulness, Stubbs shows us what a horse looks like from the outside in, describing in minute detail every muscle, sinew, blood vessel and bone of his subject.

But looking at a horse only tells us so much about its conformation, condition and personality. We look a horse over with our hands as well as our eyes, running them down a horse's legs to feel for splints, heat or other indicators that something might be wrong. Instinctively, we stroke and pat a horse to calm and reassure it, our hand tracing the curve of its neck, its belly, its flanks in a moment of intimate tactile connection. These are the same movements we use to groom a horse, tracing its form in our mind's eye, feeling it unfurl and emerge beneath our touch. We feel its weight resting in the palm of our hand when we hold a hoof to pick it out, and we sense the potential energy when we sit in the saddle and take up contact, feeling it between our legs, beneath our seat, balanced between our fingers.

Jo Taylor is an artist who caresses the form of a horse into being with long flowing strokes of pen, pencil or brush, translating tangible sensations into fluid marks on the page. The contours

of a back, neck, cheek, leg emerge beneath the brush, shaped with a sweep of the arm as if groomed into shape. Lines scud and career over strips of paper that she has stuck to the painting's surface, suggesting a slab of rippling muscle and offering a shorthand for the horses' physical, tactile presence.

Taylor begins by making a quick drawing, her graphite pencil moving across the paper with the confident, practised fluency of muscle memory. She establishes an outline that blends individual observation with long years of experience that a particular flick of the wrist and curved gesture will capture the appearance of a thoroughbred 'strutting its stuff', tail raised, legs extended, bearing the heritage of the Darley Arabian in every floating stride. What emerges is not so much a portrait of an individual as a celebration of a breed reaching back across the centuries to a shared Thoroughbred ancestry established from just three original sires - The Darley Arabian, the Byerly Turk and the Godolphin Barb.

Often the pencil or pen seems to barely skim the paper, leaving only a few fugitive marks to embody a feeling of equine freedom. Sometimes Taylor focuses on a single horse, sometimes she covers the sheet with loosely sketched figures that form herds, roaming watery, sweeping landscapes where earth and sky have fused into a nebulous sea of greys, greens and blues.

The initial graphite drawing is just a framework, a skeleton that Taylor fleshes out with a diversity of materials and playful marks. Having established the basic structure, she builds up form with slabs of solid colour that suggest mass, across which a complex calligraphy of lyrical lines play, bringing movement and a sense of lithe agility. Charcoal, pastel, acrylic, gouache and watercolour paint are splodged and splattered, dripped and dribbled onto the paper by brushes, pen and stick that shudder and streak across the sheet, mingling and merging, resisting and reacting, leaving behind a thin translucent layer of paint or a thick impasto crust that captures the glistening mercurial

nature of their coat with its intricate patterns and textures.

The solid bodies of her horses emerge out of dense black lines that carve out and delineate their physical forms. But these lines do not just describe and define. Between their edges there is a black interior - a well of infinite, limitless space that pulls us in, and what was once solid melts into air, giving Taylor's painted surfaces a feeling of dynamic complexity as they constantly shift between solidity and space, form and formlessness. Lost within a tangle of intricate marks, we find hidden landscapes. The suggestive curve of a rib becomes a hillside they might once have galloped across as if etched and hefted into their being. For, unlike Stubbs, who placed the horse within a landscape, Taylor sees the landscape through the horse, capturing that intimate synergy that unites horse, rider and place into a moment of

universal freedom where we transcend the limitations of the physical world and become part of an interconnected whole.

Although we may be initially tempted to stand before Taylor's paintings and look at them with our eyes, she invites us to dive into them with all of our senses. She wants us to taste them with the tongue of our eye, caressing each line with our gaze, becoming lost in haptic memories as our fingertips tingle with the imagined touch of a horse's flesh beneath them. Stubbs may have showed us the arteries, muscles or skeleton that lie beneath a horse's skin; but Taylor's vivid, vivacious marks take us far beyond the visual surface, plunging us into the material, showing us what it is like to feel that flesh, full of energy, life and physical presence.

Dr Richard Davey



Peace Horses Mixed media on paper 33.5 x 59 inches



Wolf Charcoal on paper 33 x 23 inches



Storm Alert Charcoal on paper 33 x 23 inches



Run for Free Mixed media on paper 20.5 x 27.5 inches



Storm Horses Mixed media on paper 33.5 x 59 inches



Revolution Mixed media on paper 33.5 x 59 inches



The Big Sky Mixed media on paper 23 x 33 inches



Surrender Charcoal on paper 31.5 x 48 inches



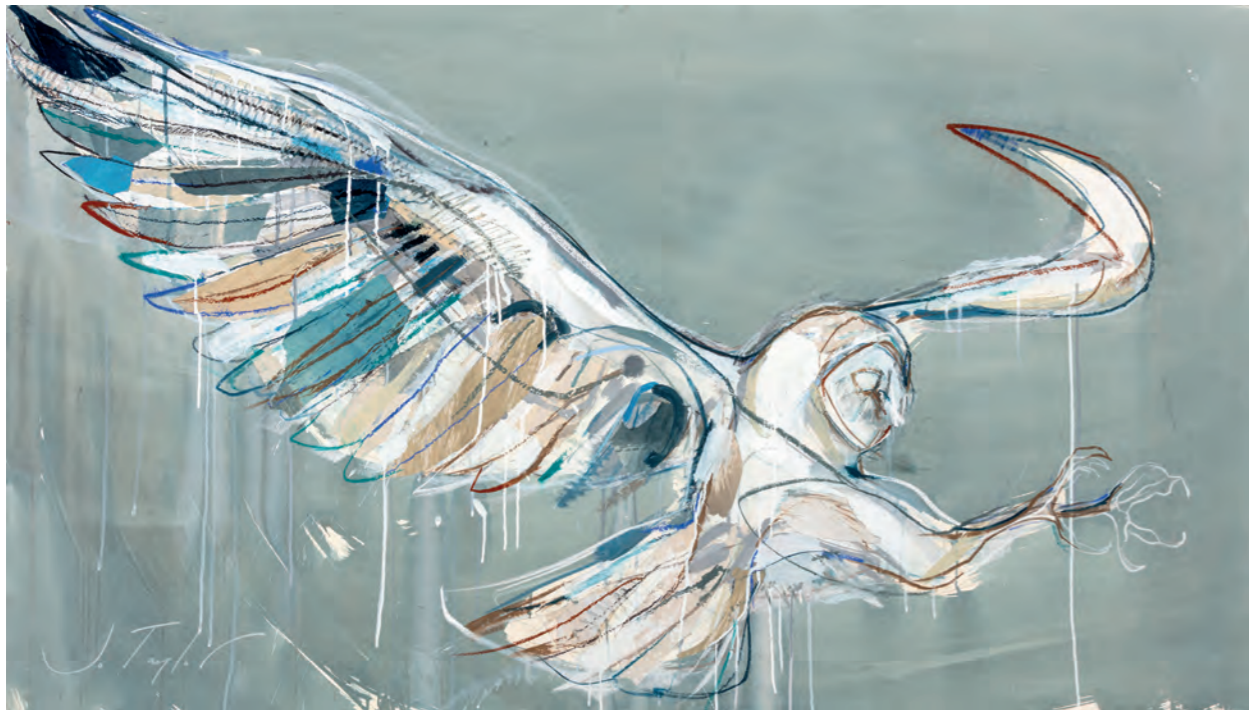
Hounds of Love II Charcoal on paper 23 x 33 inches



Dark Star
Mixed media on paper
59 x 34 inches



Storm Bird
Mixed media on paper
59 x 34 inches



Ghost Mixed media on paper 33 x 59 inches



Ghost Riders Mixed media on paper 23 x 33 inches



Spectre Mixed media on paper 33.5 x 59 inches



Wildest Dream Charcoal on paper 33.5 x 59 inches



Dark Charm Mixed media on paper 20.5 x 27.5 inches



Ancient Pathway Mixed media on paper 23 x 33 inches



Crow Charcoal on paper 23 x 33 inches

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