

Text by Christopher McHugh

Paintings, at their best, are experience. The works by Nick Bodimeade comprising *Tracks, Trails and Tarmac* embody this axiom in the most compelling way. They speak in a resonant poetry of the rush and visual bloom of moving at pace through the world – the inky swell of shadows and the sudden glare of sunlight, the twisting counterpoint of bends coming up to meet us and the punctuating stab of detail defined

These paintings explore and extend the thematic that Bodimeade launched in his *B Roads* exhibition in the autumn of 2013, based on the sensations of driving through the relentless picturesque of Sussex lanes. This project, as it turned out, led Bodimeade to rediscover his inner cyclist who has ever since continued the searching trek on- and off-road, around rural Sussex but also further afield – and Bodimeade's periodic travels have continued to extend across Europe, the United States and Africa. The strain and dash of pumping road and mountain bike around provides for a rapid, direct and energetic engagement with the landscape, somewhat at odds with the cliché of the artist tethered to an easel before the subject. But this slalom, through the changing aspect of the view, furnishes an abundant source of glancing images – a well spring of ideas for paintings. So, Bodimeade is driven equally by a voracious visual consumption (the accumulation of glimpse after glimpse) and a powerful appetite for knowing the world bodily (a kind of muscular landscape choreography).

And the excitement of this energised, first-hand interrogation of what the land can offer the painter is rendered through a commensurate panache in painterly methodology. Bodimeade's wealth of knowledge of the art of painting, its history, and, more especially, the critical contemporary embrace of lens-based imagery as source material, is crucial, as is his fencer's attack of mark making. He has a sure instinct for processing the raw data of photographic 'snaps' into dynamic abstractions that construct two-dimensional armatures for holding the space of the canvas open, making an arena for the daring performance in paint – poised, breathy, committed, exhilarating.

For those interested, the discourse with ideas and significant artists in these paintings is evident and rich. They are knowing. They deliver the injection of adrenaline missing from so many of Opie's tasteful distillations of road and journey and the specificity edited out of Katz's broad brushes with landscape (... and for my money these flavours of vision-in-motion are more visceral and convincing than Hockney's returns to scenic North Yorkshire). They appear as bold excursions into Merleau-Ponty's notion of the embodied phenomenology of perception

But enough of pedigree ... reading and reference are not necessary to 'get' these paintings – they touch the parts of sensation that other paintings often fail to reach – they have to be *felt* to be believed. In short, they take the breath away.