**ROB SMALES ⏐ life & work**

Rob was born in Bournemouth in 1981. Having lived in Germany for most of his life, he holds both British and German citizenship. He currently resides and works in Hamburg.

In his former life before becoming a painter, he started out as a grammar school boy on England’s south coast before studying Modern Languages at Oxford, and going on to work as a translator and copywriter.

The visual language of art is Rob’s first love however. With its power to connect with others in ways that are otherwise unsayable, beyond words and somewhere between the lines. The great appeal for him is that – unlike in the academic and corporate worlds where output and success can be measured – artworks do not allow themselves to be pinned down in terms of black and white truths, right or wrong, good or bad. The only possible measure – in Rob’s view – is how the art makes you feel.

Often slightly uneasy and askew, Rob’s portraits are concerned with exploring male vulnerability above all – in a culture where the notion of “manning up” is still so prevalent and sharing difficult emotions we all have is often viewed as weakness.

His abstract work is also a form of self-portraiture – an honest emotional response to the world as he experiences it. Largely inspired by nature and landscapes, ever-changing and cyclical, the multiple layers reveal a love of colour and markmaking. While bold juxtaposed shapes embrace uniqueness, imperfection and connection – all attributes that Rob likes to aim for in his art and his life. As he works towards a genuine place of self-expression as a “real man” on his own personal terms. Where vulnerability and sensitivity are not weak, but rather qualities to be celebrated and cherished.

After various exhibitions in Germany in recent years, including the solo show **COMING OUT** in 2020, this latest exhibition **MOVING ON** charts a conscious effort by Rob to embrace more change – with all the risk, uncertainty and discomfort that entails. Trusting that fortune ultimately favours the brave – and that heading where he needs to go often involves letting go along the way and jumping into the unknown. One blank canvas after the next.