

PORTFOLIO

JOHN ROBINSON

SELECTED WORKS

A REAL GIRL

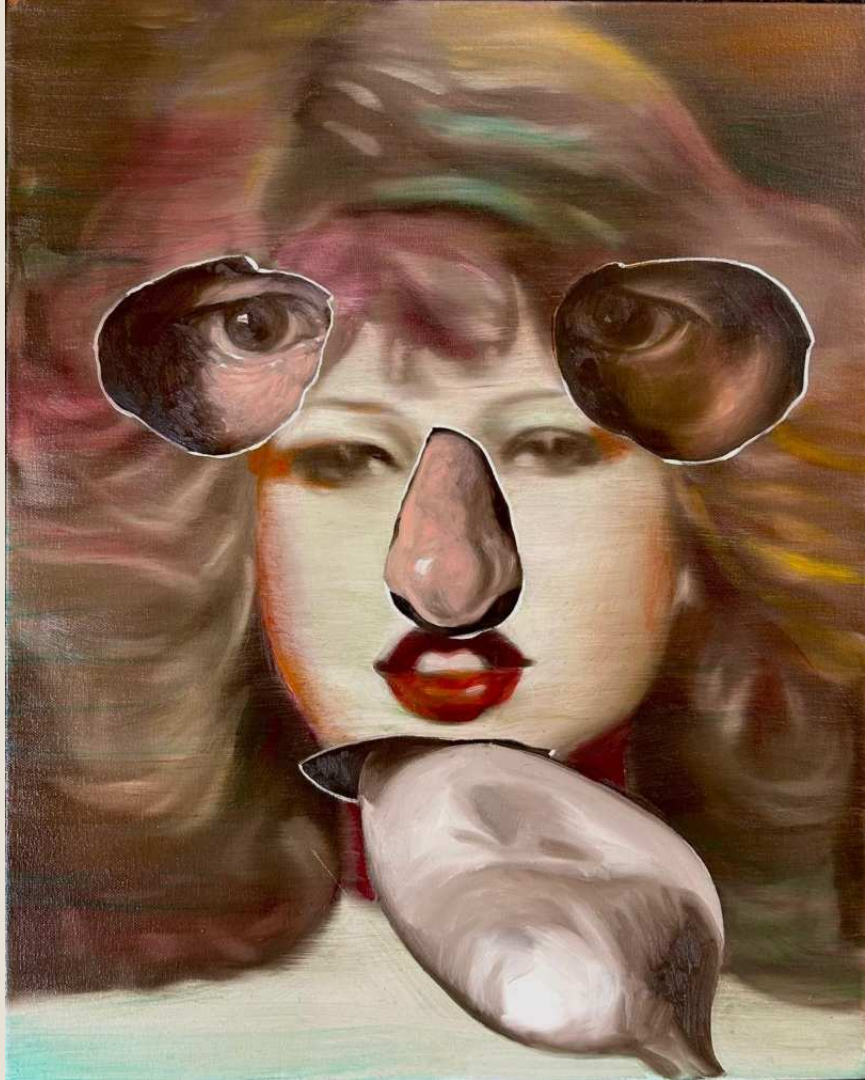
OIL ON CANVAS, 2026

51 x 41 CM

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JOHN ROBINSON is a painter whose practice is shaped by performance and by the strange authority of images already in circulation. He is drawn to material that arrives with a social, devotional or comic charge: a religious reproduction, a cosmological diagram, a fragment of European painting, an old television image, an episode of British slapstick or an object from domestic life. Some paintings begin directly from these found or mediated images; others emerge from actions staged privately or in public.

Raised in a Christian cult in Worcester, Robinson left the faith but not the need for belief. In his queerness, he learned to recognise himself obliquely in bodies and images not made for him. The desire to become someone or something else that he cannot be runs through the practice. Sometimes he inhabits the image of a beautiful woman; elsewhere it may be a saint, king or monster. He rebuilds belief through the awkwardness, glamour and familiarity of vernacular

images, searching in the ordinary for a door to the divine.

In his current cycle, *Thou Shalt Cover Thy Face*, titled after Ezekiel 12:6, many of the paintings begin in performance. Robinson constructs masks, costumes and props from reproductions of paintings, domestic objects, cheap jewellery and found images that already carry social or devotional meaning. He photographs himself inside these provisional figures, then rebuilds the encounter in oil.

The paintings preserve what remains after an invented ceremony. Robinson is drawn to transformation almost working while the body, object or source image still shows through. That failure can be comic, painful or ecstatic. He returns to the point where a mask reveals rather than conceals, and where borrowed things become temporary bodies through which another hidden theatre of self appears briefly before receding, once more, into the material fact of painting.

INTO THE TREES (THOU SHALT COVER THY FACE)
OIL ON CANVAS, 2025 · 150 × 120 CM

CRUMPLED HEADS, 2025



00:32



02:21



02:44



03:07

Performance for camera, 3 min 16 sec

Artist's studio, Worcester, UK

Video stills courtesy of the artist

Seated before a makeshift cardboard backdrop, Robinson crumples printed images of his own face and fixes the distorted fragments to a wire-mesh cage. As he works, he sings *Smells Like Teen Spirit* and addresses himself through an absurd, self-deprecating monologue. He finally wears the construction, allowing his living face to disappear into and re-emerge among its damaged reproductions.

[LINK TO FULL PERFORMANCE](#)



DA IST KEINE STELLE,
DIE DICH NICHT SIEHT (THOU SHALT COVER THY FACE)
OIL ON CANVAS, 2026 · 180 × 150 CM



FLOWERING IN BORROWED TIME
(THOU SHALT COVER THY FACE)
OIL ON CANVAS, 2025 · 50 × 41 CM

LO CORPO DENTRO AL QUALE IO FACEA OMBRA
(THOU SHALT COVER THY FACE)

OIL ON CANVAS, 2026 · 100 × 90 CM

The mask is constructed as a cardboard model of Dante's ordered universe, rising from punishment below to divine light above. The title comes from *Purgatorio* III, where Virgil recalls the mortal body in which he once cast a shadow.





HEAVEN, 2026

Live performance with artist-composed sound

7 min 50 sec

DeNode Foundation, Ghent, Belgium

13 February 2026

Presented at the opening of *People Ruin Paintings*

All three photographs document *Heaven*, the third and final performance in the *Hell / Purgatory / Heaven* trilogy.

The trilogy ascended the DeNode Foundation's three floors from Hell to Purgatory to Heaven, turning the building into a vertical model of Dante's afterlife and carrying the cosmology of *lo corpo dentro al quale io facea ombra* into live space. The performance grew from Robinson's attempt to imagine the dead trying to reach the living.

In *Heaven*, one participant wearing a mask of Robinson's face coats him in strawberry sauce, chocolate sauce, whipped cream, eggs and flour. Coded as blood or wine, excrement and semen, this tarring-and-feathering precedes baptism in the pool among masked doubles. She later removes the mask. Robinson composed the score using synthesisers and a loop pedal.

[LINK TO FULL PERFORMANCE](#)



HEAVEN I-III

TRIPTYCH, OIL ON CANVAS, 2026 · EACH PANEL 41.2 × 51.2 CM

Developed from *Heaven*, the third and final performance in the *Hell / Purgatory / Heaven* trilogy.



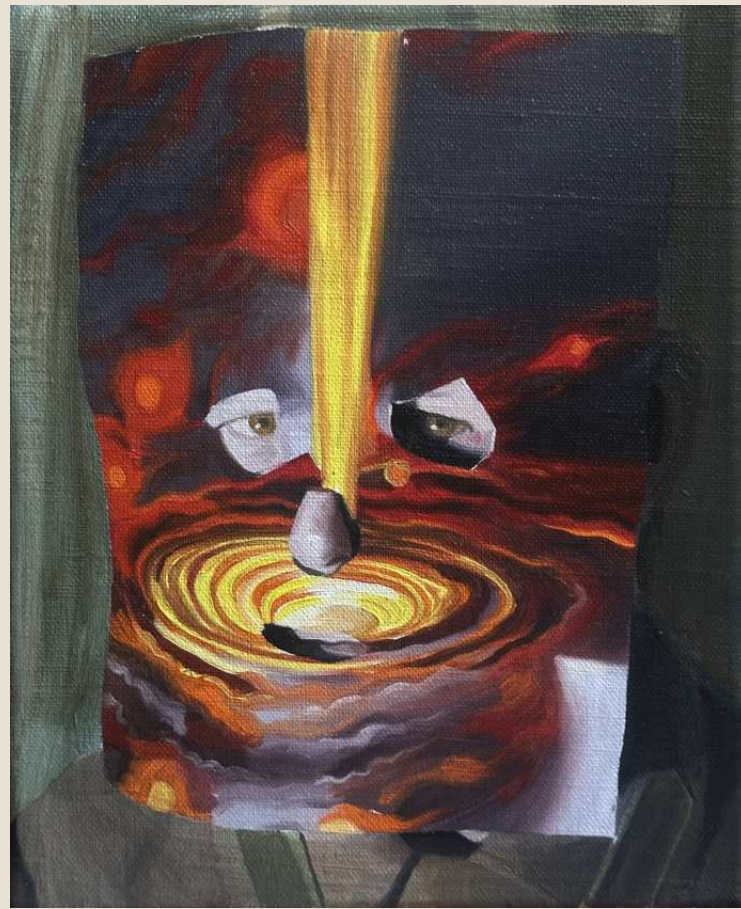
LOS OJOS DESEADOS, QUE TENGO EN MIS ENTRAÑAS
DIBUJADOS
(THOU SHALT COVER THY FACE)
OIL ON CANVAS, 2026 · 130 × 100 CM



NEBUCHADNEZZAR
OIL ON CANVAS, 2023–2025 · 180 × 150 CM



THE EYE IS BURNING
(THOU SHALT COVER THY FACE)
OIL ON CANVAS, 2026 · 150 × 120 CM



BLACK SUN (THOU SHALT COVER THY FACE)
OIL ON CANVAS, 2025 · 27 × 22 CM



FLOWERHEAD, 2024

Durational performance for camera, colour and sound, 30 min 44 sec

Artist's studio, Worcester, UK

As a closeted queer teenager, Robinson wandered fields around Worcester, picking flowers and smoking cigarettes, angry and frustrated by a life he could not yet live openly. In this durational performance he reinhabits that adolescent self through a deliberately obstructed exercise with his mother, using flowers picked from his family's garden. He must translate his mother's instructions into action himself, threading flowers one by one into a wire armature worn over his head until his face disappears. With his sight restricted by the mesh, she may direct the placement of each flower but cannot touch the arrangement. Their shared frustration becomes the performance's structure. The resulting painting carries the act into a floral self-portrait in which concealment becomes a way of appearing.

[LINK TO FULL PERFORMANCE](#)



A LONGING FOR THE LONGING (THOU SHALT COVER THY FACE)

OIL ON CANVAS, 2026 · 150 × 120 CM