



Tom Mead is a British figurative and portrait artist based in London. He shot to fame when he was a finalist on Portrait Artist of the Year and is well known for his fragmented and fractured paintings showing people in various positions. Mead's contemporary portrait paintings have been exhibited in art galleries across the UK.

Tom Mead is an accomplished portrait artist whose work captures the essence and character of his subjects with precision and skill. Based in London, Mead has developed a reputation for his ability to create striking and evocative portraits that capture the personality of his subjects through unusual compositions.

Mead's contemporary paintings use traditional skills that contrast the modern compositional techniques and 'glitch' aesthetics more reminiscent of distorted pixels on a screen.

Tom Mead's paintings are often done on a large scale and painted with a mixture of acrylic and oil paints. Mead paints onto aluminium rather than canvas, allowing an ultra smooth, untextured finish. He often depicts people looking relaxed or in casual poses in intimate, personal settings such as bedrooms. Mead gives the viewer a sense of fragmentation and movement by cutting into his compositions and overlapping sections, which contrasts the relaxed, informal poses.

#### TOP FACTS ABOUT TOM MEAD:

- Mead was born in London in 1985
- He studied BA Fine Art: Painting at UAL Wimbledon
- Tom reached the final of Portrait Artist of the Year on Sky Arts in 2019
- He is inspired by the storytelling aspect of drawing and painting
- Titles for his artworks often come from song lyrics
- One of his favourite artists is Euan Uglow
- About his paintings, Mead says 'I aim to show a lived experience of people from my generation and background in an honest way'
- Mead's paintings have been exhibited in galleries across the UK
- His work has been shortlisted for a number of national prizes, including the Jackson's Art Prize and John Dalton Art Prize



Tom Mead's figurative paintings explore themes of childhood, passing time and identity. His compositions give the viewer a glimpse into a personal, contemplative moment, which is then partially fragmented or



shattered, as if there is a broken screen in front of them.

Look at the painting *Stoic*, (above). How has Mead made use of colour, tints and shades to suggest an idea of time passing? The main focal point is a figure looking directly at the viewer, painted in more realistic tones. In the background, the same figure is painted much smaller in a light, monochromatic colour scheme. The second figure is looking off into the distance, and there is a suggestion of a third, smaller figure further in the distance. The overall effect is of a man perhaps moving through time, or a memory becoming clearer.

The calm, muted colour scheme is contrasted through the use of a harsh, broken or 'glitched' composition. **What sort of mood do you think the figure in *Stoic* is in? Why?**



**How has Mead made use of colour and shape to draw attention to the figure above? How has he made one figure stand out against the others?**



Tom Mead's portrait paintings often suggest the passing of time or that the subject is moving. **How has Mead shown movement in this piece (left)? What impact do the splashes of bright red have against the muted brown tones?**





If you watch clips from Mead's Instagram account, you can see some of the steps he takes to create his paintings. The clip first shows some pieces by Egon Schiele that have inspired the work, then an accurately drawn out composition. Mead then starts an underpainting onto the drawing using neutral tones. After this, he starts adding bolder colours and making decisions about which areas should be blocks of colour and which should be more realistic.

Tom Mead's paintings, done on smooth aluminium rather than canvas, look as though we are seeing figures through a broken screen. Why do you think Mead chooses to paint onto aluminium sheets rather than canvas? What does that help him achieve?

About his paintings, Tom says:

*"Once I've taken the photos (sometimes around 100), I'll choose around 6-8 and combine them in photoshop to loosely follow my planned glitches. I make these collages very rough, as I don't want to feel like I'm copying them when I'm painting. I might paint a mini colour study before the final piece too."*

<https://behindtheartist.co.uk/artist-interviews/artist-interview-tom-mead>

If you look carefully at Tom Mead's paintings and analyse the content (what you can see in them), you will notice different objects such as toys or items related to hobbies and interests. These objects help to reinforce the idea of memories and identity that permeate Mead's paintings.

**Look through Tom Mead's paintings – do you recognise any of the characters he's painted? List the items you can see and try to explain why you think he has included them.**

**What do you think of Tom Mead's artwork? How could you describe it? What messages of meanings can you interpret from the work?**







