

THOMAS DANE GALLERY

Jimmy Robert
The Erotics of Passage

Private view: Thursday 5 June, 6–8pm
Exhibition dates: 6 June–2 August 2025

Thomas Dane Gallery
3 Duke Street, St James's, London SW1

Thomas Dane Gallery is pleased to announce *The Erotics of Passage*, Jimmy Robert's second solo exhibition with the gallery, his first in the gallery in London. The new body of work continues Robert's exploration of the intersection between photography and sculpture, delving into the instability of memory, image, and narrative.

Working with found images, old family photographs and constructed collages Robert avoids the formality and orthodoxy of typical framing methods; instead, allowing his photographs to hang from, drape over, and fold around invented wooden structures. By undermining his photographs' key illusory function, that of being a window into representation, they teeter in an uncertain place, oscillating between image and object, presence and illusion.

Jutting out from the wall, balanced freestanding in space, and unglazed, the photo-objects feel precarious and vulnerable, emphasised by the charred surfaces of many of the wooden structures. The spectral images drawn across time from Robert's own family history and studio image archive coalesce into an unstable, intimate visual album.

Echoing throughout the exhibition is the open-ended motif of the white collared shirt, a symbol both ordinary and loaded. Through multiple references to this familiar and seemingly benign object Robert explores its multiple readings as uniform, disguise, costume, or fashion item, moving between the personal and political, the intimate and the institutional.

Embedded within the exhibition is a series of texts by art historian and writer Elvan Zabunyan. These writings weave through and around the artworks, forming a reciprocal dialogue with Robert's practice. Together, image, object and text reflect on the slipperiness of personal and collective memory—how it is framed, fictionalised, and performed.

Robert takes the exhibition's title from James S. Williams' book on Marguerite Duras' later writing including her semi-autobiographical work, *L'amant*, in reference to its meditation on memory as both illusion and confession—a marking of personal time through the body, through image, and through gesture. In this exhibition, memory is rendered as fragile, precarious, and in constant flux.

Jimmy Robert's multidisciplinary practice encompasses performance, photography, film and collage, frequently collapsing distinctions between these mediums. Robert's interest in how the body can be personified through materials and how materials can be performed through the body is a major force that integrates his longtime work with performance with his larger practice. Robert has choreographed performances within exhibition spaces, in relation to existing architectural structures, as well as restaging, reframing or sampling historical performances. The frequent citation of moments from art history, film and literature is characteristic of his deeply layered narratives.

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Robert was born in Guadeloupe (FR) in 1975 and currently lives and works between Paris and Berlin. Robert was the subject of a mid-career survey at Nottingham Contemporary in 2020, which travelled to Museion, Bolzano and CRAC Occitanie, Sète. Recent solo exhibitions include Staatliche Kunsthalle Baden-Baden, Baden-Baden, Germany (2023); Künstlerhaus Bremen, Bremen, Germany (2022); The Hunterian, Glasgow, Scotland (2021); La Synagogue de Delme, Delme, France (2016); Museum M, Leuven, Belgium (2017); Power Plant, Toronto, Canada (2013); Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago IL (2012); and Jeu de Paume, Paris, France (2012). Robert's performances have also been presented at Tate Britain, London, England; MoMA, New York NY and Migros Museum, Zurich, Switzerland. His most recent performance *Joie Noire* premiered in 2019 at KW Institute of Contemporary Art, Berlin, Germany and travelled to Kaaithheater, Brussels, Belgium and was also exhibited at Palais de Tokyo, Paris, France, in 2023 as part of *Exposed*, curated by François Piron.

Elvan Zabunyan, contemporary art historian, is a professor at Paris 1 Panthéon Sorbonne University and an art critic. A specialist of African-American art and related historical and political issues, her current research focusing on the memory of slavery in contemporary art in the United States and the Caribbean has led to the book *Réunir les bouts du monde*, published in October 2024 by B42. She has published several monographs and written numerous articles for edited volumes, exhibition catalogues and national and international periodicals. Her pioneering book *Black is A Color, A History of African American Contemporary Art*, published in French and in English, won the SAES/AFEA research prize in 2005. She is also the author of the first monograph on Korean-American artist Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, *Theresa Hak Kyung Cha, Berkeley, 1968* (2013). More recently, she co-edited *Constellations subjectives, pour une histoire féministe de l'art* (Ixe, 2020), *Decolonizing Colonial Heritage, New Agendas, Actors, and Practices in and beyond Europe* (Routledge, 2022), and *L'art en France à la croisée des cultures* (Paris/Heidelberg, DFK Paris/arthistoricum.net, 2023).

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Gallery hours: Tuesday to Friday 11am–6pm, Saturday 12pm–6pm or by appointment.

Admission: Free

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Nearest Tube: Green Park or Piccadilly Circus

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