Christine Holley, “Timeless scenes of memory and place: Hurvin Anderson at Thomas Dane Gallery”, One Stop Arts, October 21 2015
To see the new Hurvin Anderson exhibition, stroll down Duke Street – nearest tube Green Park – and on the left you'll find the Thomas Dane gallery at no. 11, and then again, a few doors further down at no. 3. This exhibition extends across both of these discreetly fronted spaces. At no. 11, ring the doorbell straight ahead of you to view six of the nineteen works that introduce Hurvin Anderson’s New Works.

On display at this first-floor gallery is American Tan (Mrs S. Keita). An imposing figurative oil painting on canvas, it depicts a female figure in an intricately detailed interior. The other works are acrylic on canvas and paper. Vibrant and vivid, these paintings straddle the figurative and the abstract in intimate scenes, some interior and others exterior. At the second Thomas Dane gallery at no.3 Duke Street is the main bulk of works in this exhibition and here, it’s the large-scale lush landscapes that make a major impact. It’s as though all of your summers have come at once as you stand amid canvases of verdant hues that seem to bask in sunlight.

But there’s a hint that all might not be well. In Diego and Scrumping, both oil and acrylic on canvas, the lush foliage invites you in, but there's the suggestion of a grille to the picture plane in both paintings that seems to keep you out. The grille is a device that this painter uses a great deal and to understand this better, it's necessary to know more about the artist's background. A well-established and acclaimed international artist, and a British painter of Jamaican descent, Hurvin Anderson was born in 1965 in Birmingham. Brought up with these dual cultural identities, his paintings reference both countries, and the grilles overpainted onto otherwise idyllic scenes are possible references to those found on any security-conscious estate in Jamaica.

This mingling of place and memory is the hallmark of Anderson’s oeuvre. Known for the evocative nature of his paintings, he often speaks of being in one place while thinking about another. In his ability to capture timeless moments of perfect tranquillity, Anderson’s art shares an affinity with that of Peter Doig. Pondlife is a painting sharing the space with Diego and Scrumping. Different due to its restrained, monochromatic palette, this oil-on-canvas does away with needless detail to evoke twisting vegetation emerging from an atmospheric grey mist. Paint drips down in silver/grey shadows of reflective, watery stillness. It seems this is a painter who loves the process of painting; giving the medium its head and seeing what it will do. It’s as though he uses the paint to create immense abstract areas, only pulling it all together into form and semblance at the last minute. Intuitive and atmospheric, his work is yet rooted in a rigid structure.

Having had solo exhibitions in the UK that include Tate Modern and the Dulwich Picture Gallery, this is Anderson's third solo exhibition at Thomas Dane Gallery, in tandem with his solo exhibition at Birmingham's Ikon Gallery. He exhibits regularly overseas and has participated in a group exhibition in Chicago which has just ended.

If you revel in vivid colours and the joy of seeing paint in all its glory, you'll enjoy this exhibition by such an able and imaginative painter. The artist regards this accomplished body of work as a starting point and as embodying themes and ideas to which he aims to return. That being so, watch this space for more.

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