

An abstract painting by Anish Kapoor, featuring a dense, textured composition of red, black, and yellow. The brushstrokes are thick and expressive, creating a sense of depth and movement. The colors are layered and blended, with a prominent red area on the right side and a yellow area on the left. The overall effect is one of intense energy and emotional intensity.

Anish  
Kapoor

Painting

2 Oct 21  
– 13 Feb 22

# About Modern Art Oxford

Located in one of the world's great cities of learning, Modern Art Oxford is a leading contemporary art space with an international reputation for innovative and ambitious programming. We promote creativity in all its visual forms as a progressive agent of social change. Our programmes, both in person and online, are shaped by a belief in dialogue between contemporary art and ideas, and celebrate the relevance of contemporary visual culture to society today.

Modern Art Oxford offers opportunities for audiences to be inspired, to enjoy, to learn, and to develop their creative potential.

# Anish Kapoor Painting

Anish Kapoor (b. 1954 Mumbai) is one of the best known artists of his generation, renowned for creating large works that explore the perception and physicality of the human body. Kapoor is an artist who is interested in *what he does not know*. This attitude of unknowing has driven the creation of work that pushes beyond conventional constraints and expectations, resulting in a diverse artistic output that has attracted international acclaim. *Painting* presents new work made through his daily practice of painting in his London studio. Made in 2020 and 2021, during the pandemic, these paintings speak to both the creative life-force and vulnerability of our collective bodies.

**“The art I love, the art I make... celebrates the sensual while always knowing that decay is close.”  
– Anish Kapoor**

In the early 1970s, Kapoor moved to London to study art following his childhood in a Jewish Hindu family in Mumbai, India. Studying at Hornsey College and Chelsea School of Art, Kapoor developed the idea of the human body as indeterminate, both male and female, a universal body united in its organic materiality - flesh, organs and Kapoor has continued to make work in relation to this concept. Early on, the artist established a distinctive colour palette of pigments — crimson red, bright yellow, deep blue, stark black and white—which continues to this day<sup>1</sup>.

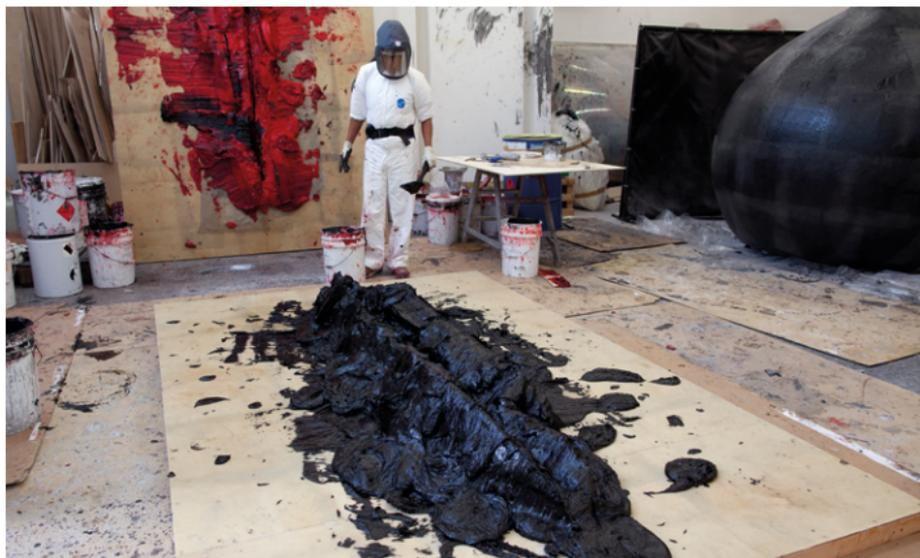
<sup>1</sup> Kapoor exhibited at Modern Art Oxford (then called the Museum of Modern Art Oxford) in 1982, as one of a generation of pioneering progressive artists featured in 'India: Myth and Reality: aspects of Modern Indian Art'. He created the iconic, colour-saturated pigment works 'White Sand, Red Millet, Many Flowers' (1982), which occupied the floor space along with the viewer, in Modern Art Oxford's Upper Gallery.

Kapoor consistently engages with how painting influences the way we perceive ourselves and our surroundings. He experiments with the medium's ability to create visual effects and illusions, playing on the way the eye perceives light, form and colour to address our emotional, embodied experience as viewers of the work. Kapoor's latest works illuminate the power of painting, evoking visual fictions created by pigments, waxes, acrylics, oils, fabrics and frames. With this he continues in painting's long endeavour to understand and depict violence and the human body, a tradition stretching back to before the Renaissance. From anatomical drawings to the flagellation of martyrs, beheadings of saints, and atrocities of war, there are many art historical paintings that are precursors to these energetic abstractions.

Kapoor's practice invites us to consider vital questions relevant to everybody: *What is it to be a living body in this world? And what is it to bring something into being?* His new paintings are gut-wrenching in their raw vulnerability, their red tones suggesting intensely affective landscapes that confront the subject of our physical existence. Floor-based works are composed of forms that suggest internal bodily organs, some brutally hoisted onto metal tripods or framed within trays. But even when enclosed within fixed boundaries, overflow spouts give warning that the fresh bloody liquid may overwhelm its containers.

**“There are two ritual materials, and only two. One is earth and the other is blood, and they are deeply connected to each other.” – Anish Kapoor**

His practice demonstrates an insistent desire to go beyond the surface, which can be seen here in the recurring motifs: the portals, chasms, blood, viscera,



Anish Kapoor Studio, 2019. © Anish Kapoor. All rights reserved, 2019.



Anish Kapoor, *The world trembles when I retrieve from my ancient past what I need to live in the depths of myself*, 2020. Photograph: Stephen White & Co. © Anish Kapoor. All rights reserved DACS, 2021.

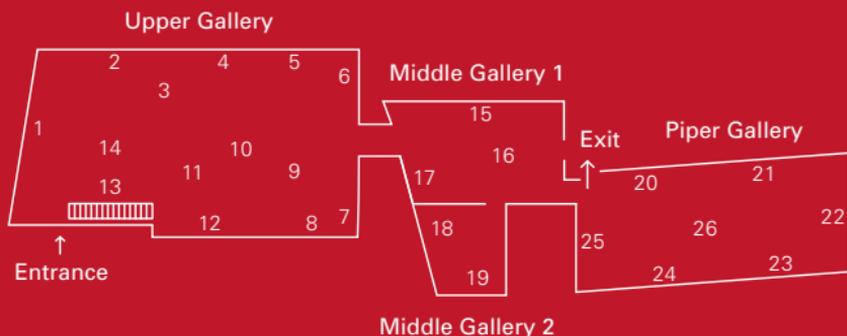
orifices, and wounds. On the walls, oils on canvas feature soft brushwork suggesting skies filled with smoke and light, contrasting dramatically with dense mark-making that evokes the dark earth as it swells and bursts in bloody eruptions. The artist's hand is present and, as a viewer, we can perceive his physical actions: sweeping arm gestures with thick brushes denote full body stretches. These are later cut through by quick decisive movements of a hard point, a brush-handle or stick, then swift movements of fingers smoothly redistributing fresh paint on the surface.

When Kapoor speaks about creating new work an intriguing proposition emerges: that creative acts are in essence female. The capacity to give birth, both miraculous and commonplace, is visibly evidenced in his works through blood, which he often depicts as it is the most regularly occurring demonstration of our generative potential. Kapoor regards the inherent feminine self as a necessary precursor to acts that create something new in the world, and this concept of the feminine self appears to be inextricable from his belief in the vital importance of creative risk<sup>2</sup>.

Kapoor considers the art studio a site of education - a place where the artist must unlearn what they think they know in order to take creative risks. For Kapoor, making while in a state of attention that is 'not knowing' enables things to arise and content to emerge. With his paintings, as with his better-known sculptural works, Kapoor compels viewers to join him in unlearning what we think we know, in order to intimately engage with the messy reality of our individual but universal existence. For Kapoor, beauty and fear coexist, interdependent in creative endeavour and the biological creation of life.

<sup>2</sup> Kapoor at times references the sacred feminine of ancient goddesses. For example, he wrote in correspondence with the eminent feminist philosopher Julia Kristeva, 'This feminine being is not some nice mother, she is after all Inanna, the goddess of war, death, and sex.'

# List of Works



## UPPER GALLERY

1. *Red Within Her*, 2020  
Oil on canvas, 213x274cm
2. *The Shadowed*, 2020  
Oil on canvas, 244x305cm
3. *Initiation*, 2020  
Wood, resin,  
125x192.5x192.5cm
4. *The Dark*, 2021  
Oil on canvas, 213x274cm
5. *Dark Torn*, 2020  
Oil on canvas, 183x244 cm
6. *Scythe*, 2021  
Oil on canvas, 213x274cm
7. *Y Stick*, 2021  
Oil on canvas, 213x274cm
8. *Red Within Me*, 2020  
Oil on canvas, 183x244cm
9. *Rite*, 2020  
Wood, silicone,  
188x128x238cm
10. *Look at Me*, 2020  
Steel, wood, resin,  
176x280x280cm

11. *Prosthetic III*, 2020  
Steel, silicone, canvas,  
196x139x96cm
12. *Orpheus Looks Back*,  
2020  
Oil on canvas, 213x274cm
13. *My Terrible Insides*,  
2020  
Oil on canvas, 213x274cm
14. *Prosthetic*, 2020  
Wood, resin, canvas,  
137x192x192cm

## MIDDLE GALLERIES

15. *Blood Rising*, 2020  
Oil on canvas, 183x244cm
16. *She Knows*, 2020  
Steel, resin, canvas,  
199x112x80cm
17. *Now Here With Her  
Oneiric Instruments*, 2020  
Oil on canvas, 183x244cm
18. *Goddess as a Girl*, 2017  
Mixed media and oil on  
canvas 50x153x210cm

19. *Vein*, 2001  
Dye, water, dimensions  
variable

## PIPER GALLERY

20. *Wounds that Glow*, 2020  
Oil on canvas, 213x274cm
21. *First and Last*, 2020  
Oil on canvas, 213x274cm
22. *The world trembles  
when I retrieve from my  
ancient past what I need to  
live in the depths of Myself*,  
2020  
Oil on canvas, 244x305cm
23. *Babel II*, 2021  
Oil on canvas, 244x305cm
24. *Combusted Self*, 2020  
Oil on canvas, 244x305cm
25. *Black Within Me*, 2021  
Oil on canvas, 244x305cm
26. *Blood and Semen*, 2019  
Resin pigment and steel,  
40x537x387cm

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TORINO, ITALIA, 1895

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