

Sam Macinnes

Author: Verity Babbs

Sam Macinnes applies his pastels with a vehemence that could be interpreted as rage. The marks are scratchy and heavy, creating dark outlines and thick textures, with each area filled in intensely to achieve the vibrancy for which Macinnes is known. There's something sentimental about the way the artist attacks his paper and canvases: a youthful energy that is wild but complex. His approach is not so much aggressive, as expressive.

The artist's 'dude' characters are reflections of his friends in Edinburgh and Glasgow; his portfolio is filled with tracksuits, Tennent's, and football matches. In 'Pet Shop Biyz' we are given a look into the lives of young Scottish men, made relatable by the artist's zoomorphic characters. No matter how many times Macinnes' figures give me the finger, I can't ignore a quieter undertone, verging on sadness, that pervades his pieces. In this show, Macinnes explores young men's defences – their branded clothes, their social groups, their vices – but their vulnerabilities still glow through. Much like Basquiat before him (and in a similar street-art inspired, oftentimes harsh style) the artist captures poetically the experiences of youth in the city.

Sam Macinnes has already found a recognisable, individual style which sets him apart from so many of his contemporaries. 'Pet Shop Biyz' is going to be an excellent debut for Macinnes who has so suitably paired with the Rafiki Gallery in their joint mission to cut through artworld bullshit and to bring (and keep) cutting-edge contemporary art in Scotland.