



ALICE BLACK

7 Windmill St
London, W1T 2JD

MATTHEW HARRIS

A TABLE OF PREPARATIONS

Private View | 18 May 6–8pm
19 May – 22 June 2023



ALICE BLACK is proud to present Matthew Harris 'A Table of Preparations', previewing at our London space in Fitzrovia on Thursday 18th May (6-8 pm). Harris' first solo exhibition at the gallery debuts a new body of work constructed in cloth and paper. The exhibition's title is borrowed from an epigram coined by avant-garde composer John Cage to describe the instructions he gave on how to 'prepare' a piano to create indeterminate sound. Drawing inspiration from a "Cagean game of chance", the show gives prominence to Harris' ongoing explorations into the compositional possibilities that surface through anarchic spontaneity.

From the early 1940s, Cage experimented with strategically placing a variety of objects into the strings of a piano. Using a selection of everyday items - including nuts and bolts, screws, erasers, blocks of wood and strips of rubber, plastic and card - Cage set about transforming the sonic world of the instrument. The once familiar voice of the piano would be transformed into an intensely colourful and sometimes riotous palette of sound. The idea of the 'Prepared Piano' as a visual idea has preoccupied Harris for many years, ever since seeing one prepared for a concert of Cage's music at the Cheltenham Music Festival. A group of familiar and unfamiliar shapes being trapped and held within the vertical structuring of piano wires has similitudes with Harris' way of holding images in place with lines of wrapped thread, or layers of cloth bound together through vertical pleating.

Work in this exhibition originated from a series of shapes collected over time, both physically and photographically. More often than not discovered on the floor, the random and mundane objects squashed and pressed into pavements and road surfaces that catch Harris' eye form one of the consistent starting points for his work. Through adopting procedures that utilise games of chance and indeterminacy, these found shapes are played with and actively explored, broken down and reconfigured, forming new unexpected shapes and configurations. These methodologies of chance include rolling dice, tossing stencils in a frisbee motion, and following a predetermined formula correlating numbers to actions. Working within the parameters of these systems allows Harris enormous freedom.

All of Harris' work utilises a process of deliberate tension; continuous expansion and contraction, action and reaction, a process whereby layers of image form strata of embedded material, 'seeded with potentiality'. Cloth pieces are constructed from layers of painted cotton twill and Muslin. The paper pieces are made from layers of Japanese mulberry paper painted with ink, acrylic paint, oil pastel, oil stick and beeswax. Both cloth and paper are bound together with a waxed linen thread. As Harris cuts through the material, shapes appear and lines, areas of colour and texture are exposed and a playful movement begins. Excavating down through the layers, scraps and fragments of image reveal themselves. Some elements are kept and left where they are; others are moved; some are unearthed and then buried again. Flowing with the material itself, Harris responds quickly at times and more slowly at others until eventually a composition begins to emerge.

In much the same way improvisation in jazz interpolates from the theme of a standard tune, elements of the original shape remain in Harris' works but often they are only glimpsed or echoed as fragments within the new. The process by which Harris creates and constructs images through an alternating rhythm of paper and cloth, paint and thread, has become a ritual of making and unmaking developed over many years. Working the material is at the heart of his meditative ritual; not just the physical material of fabrics but the material stuff of an image. Ultimately, this process allows for infinite possibility and variation explored within the confines of the original materiality. More often than not Harris makes pieces in series of three or more, all of which have their starting point in the same image; varied reimaginings of what had been.

The resulting fragments and scraps of image, whether in paper or cloth, are simultaneously complete and incomplete in themselves, as if torn from a much larger whole. They are images temporarily bound, held still for the present whilst retaining their infinite potential for change.





Matthew Harris

'Table of Preparations Cloth No IV (Kōan for Cage)'

Acrylic paint and linen thread on constructed cotton cloth)

106 x 80 cm

£ 9,000 (+ VAT)

Sold



Matthew Harris

'Table of Preparations Cloth No I. (Riddle)'

Acrylic paint and linen thread on constructed cotton cloth

84.5 x 66.5 cm

£ 7,000 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

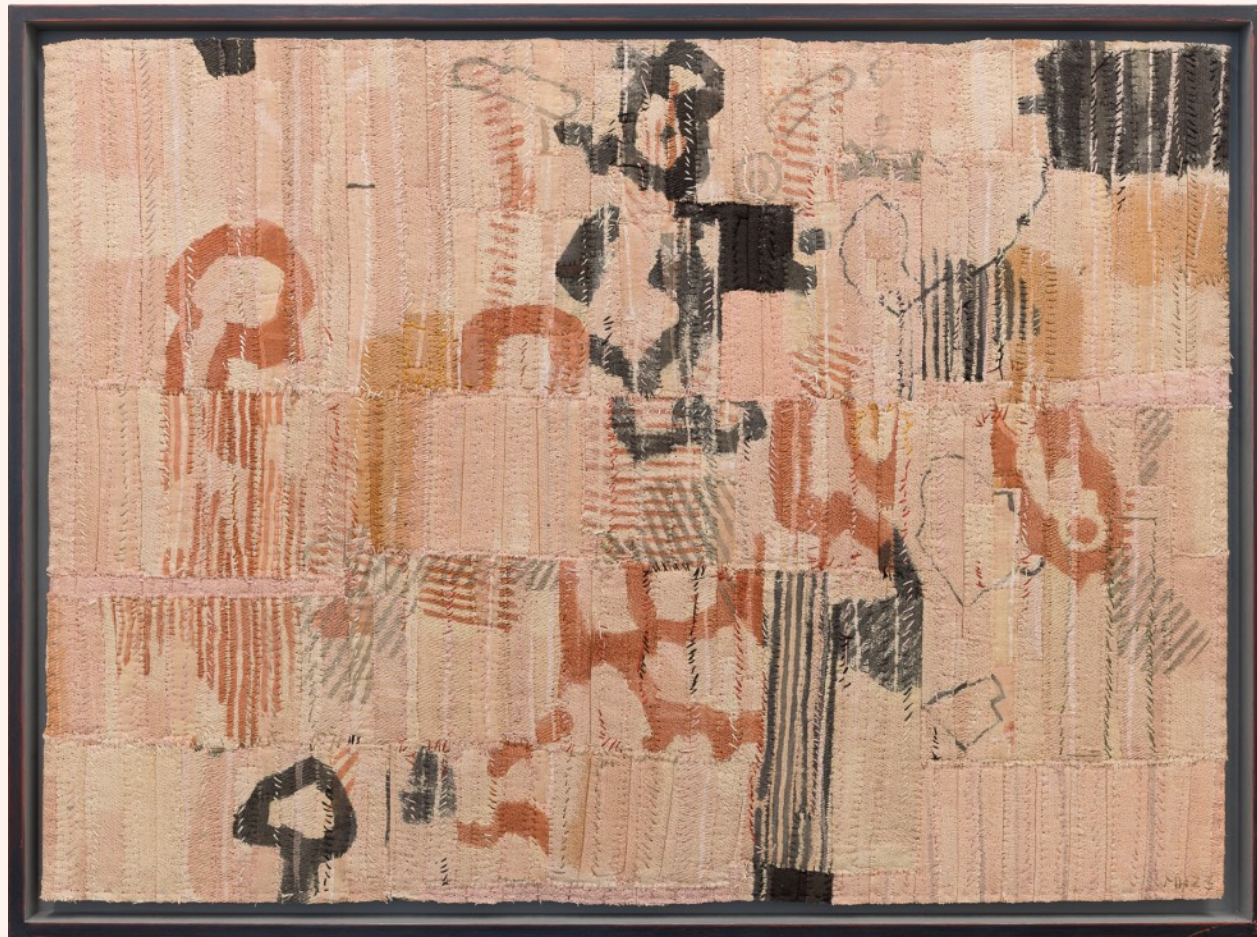
'Table of Preparations Cloth No II. (Game)'

Acrylic paint and linen thread on hand stitched
constructed cotton cloth

48.5 x 37.5 cm

£ 3,000 (+ VAT)

Sold



Matthew Harris

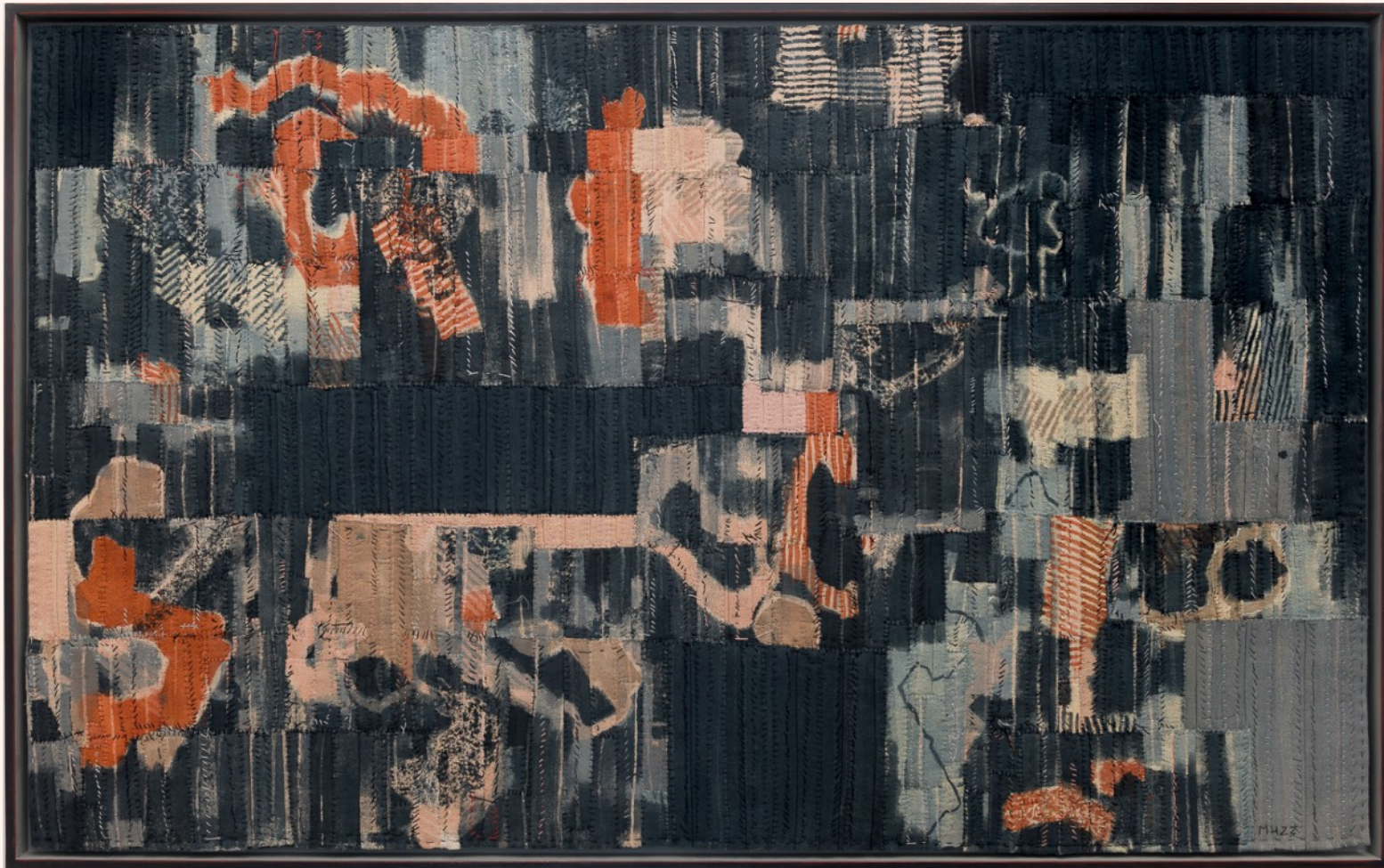
'Table of Preparations Cloth No III. (Stele)'

Acrylic paint and linen thread on constructed cotton cloth

87 x 64.5 cm

£ 7,000 (+ VAT)





Matthew Harris

'Table of Preparations Cloth No V. (Natural Selection)'

Acrylic paint and linen thread on constructed cotton cloth

153 x 96 cm

£ 12,000 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations. Pink sequence No VI'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board
35.5 x 34 cm

£ 2,400 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations. Pink Sequence No V'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

34 x 34 cm

£ 2,400 (+ VAT)





Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations. Pink sequence No IV'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board
37 x 35 cm

£ 2,400 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

'from A table of Preparations. Grey sequence No I'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

36.5 x 36 cm

£ 2,400 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations. Pink sequence No III'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

38.5 x 36 cm

£ 2,400 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations. Pink sequence No II'

Paint, Ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

39 x 35 cm

£ 2,400 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations. Pink Sequence No 1'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

34 x 35 cm

£ 2,400 (+ VAT)





Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations. Grey sequence No V'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

54 x 65 cm

£ 3,500 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations. Indigo sequence No 1'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

41.5 x 32.5 cm

£ 2,700 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris
'from A Table of Preparations. Grey Sequence No III'
Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board
34 x 32 cm

£ 2,400 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris
'from A Table of Preparations. Grey sequence No II'
Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board
33 x 33.5 cm

£ 2,400 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparation. Indigo sequence No III'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

33.5 x 32 cm

£ 2,400 (+ VAT)





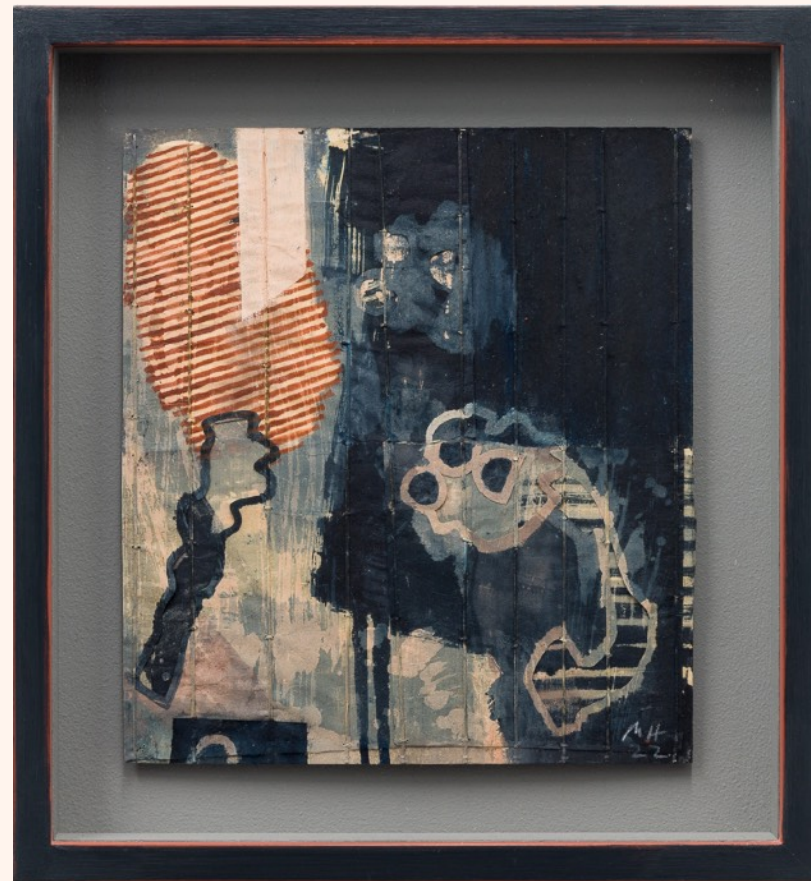
Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations. Indigo sequence No II'

Paint, Ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

32 x 33 cm

£ 2,400 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations Indigo sequence No V'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

26.5 x 29 cm

£ 2,100 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations. Indigo sequence No IV'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

27 x 30 cm

£ 2,100 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations. Grey sequence No IV'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

28 x 28 cm

£ 2,100 (+ VAT)



Matthew Harris

'from A Table of Preparations. Indigo sequence No VI'

Paint, ink, oil bar, beeswax and linen thread on paper and board

30 x 33 cm

£ 2,100 (+ VAT)



“By moving to and fro across an image, working with it upside down and back to front, folding and cutting, piecing and re-piecing, I play with the material in a Cagean game of chance. A game in which ‘nothing is a mistake, there is no win and no fail, there is only make’, moving information around, playing with shape, rhythm, composition and pitch, in search of something new; an image that I haven’t seen before, an image that I had some sense of but which is new and unexpected. As a musician might improvise around a given theme I try to exploit and work the limited material in order to create a set of variations.”

MATTHEW HARRIS



Matthew Harris was born in Kent and now lives and works in Stroud, Gloucestershire. Harris received his BA from Goldsmiths College of Art (1984-7). He has exhibited internationally across the UK, Europe, the US and Japan and is featured in prominent public collections including The Whitworth Museum and Art Gallery (UK), the Crafts Council Collection (UK), and the International Quilt Museum, Nebraska (USA). Harris' practice also perforates the music realm, having collaborated in 2014 with British Composer Howard Skempton and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group on 'Field Notes', a UK concert tour.

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