

DRESSING ABOVE YOUR STATION

Fashion and Textiles in the Life and Work of the Artist Steven Campbell

31 MARCH – 26 JUNE 2022



“I’ve got a really good physical appearance. Good clothes. Not an unusual face, but a made face. An invented look, which suits me. Personality? I suppose I have one.” Steven Campbell, 1992

Dear Visitor,

Welcome to ‘Dressing Above Your Station’. This exhibition considers the life and work of the artist Steven Campbell from a fashion and textiles perspective. It examines the depiction of clothing and cloth in his paintings as well as the role of fashion in Steven and his wife Carol’s life and aspirations. We highlight the importance of leaving and returning home to Scotland in their sartorial biographies; and what it feels like to stick out like a sore thumb, for better or worse, in Scotland. Our interest in this approach to Steven’s work was prompted by our own sartorial biographies and, we hope, will resonate with you as you tour the exhibition.

The title, ‘Dressing Above Your Station’, alludes to the role that clothes play in our dreams, desires and future selves. Also, the exhibition draws upon a long tradition, one that can be traced back to the sumptuary laws – a sort of mediaeval form of the fashion police – which, even if these rules are no longer enshrined in law, are still a highly codified part of British culture. It’s this clash between how we are supposed to dress and the way we want to that allowed Steven and Carol to develop their very own form of vernacular panache.

For those of you not already familiar with his work, Steven Campbell was a Scottish artist. Although best known as a painter, his practice encompassed a range of interdisciplinary media. He was a graduate of The Glasgow School of Art, which he attended after several years working at Clydebridge Steelworks. He was proud of his working-class roots and this social context informed his work, which included performance, community art projects, appropriation, writing and immersive installations as well as his much-lauded paintings. He passed away in 2007 aged 54 and is survived by his wife Carol and their three children, Lauren, Greer and Rory.

The exhibition continues the recontextualization of Steven's practice undertaken by other curators and scholars in recent years. To this end, we have endeavoured to show his work alongside contemporaries he is not ordinarily associated with. Rei Kawakubo of Comme des Garçons, Archie Brennan, Robert Stewart, Lord Snowdon and Atelier E.B all provide fresh counterpoints from which to consider the context, content and reach of his practice.

The virtual room you are about to enter is an exact, 1:1 scale digital model of Tramway's largest exhibition space, Tramway 2. The exhibition appears as it would in real life. It features digital representations of Steven Campbell paintings, clothing and personal mementos. An audio tour, narrated by Steven's wife, Carol, guides you around the space.

Yours,

Beca Lipscombe and Mairi MacKenzie,
Curators of 'Dressing Above Your Station'

Poster Edition for sale at panel.co.uk/shop

dressingaboveyourstation.com

Visit the exhibition on your desktop computer, laptop, tablet or smartphone.

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