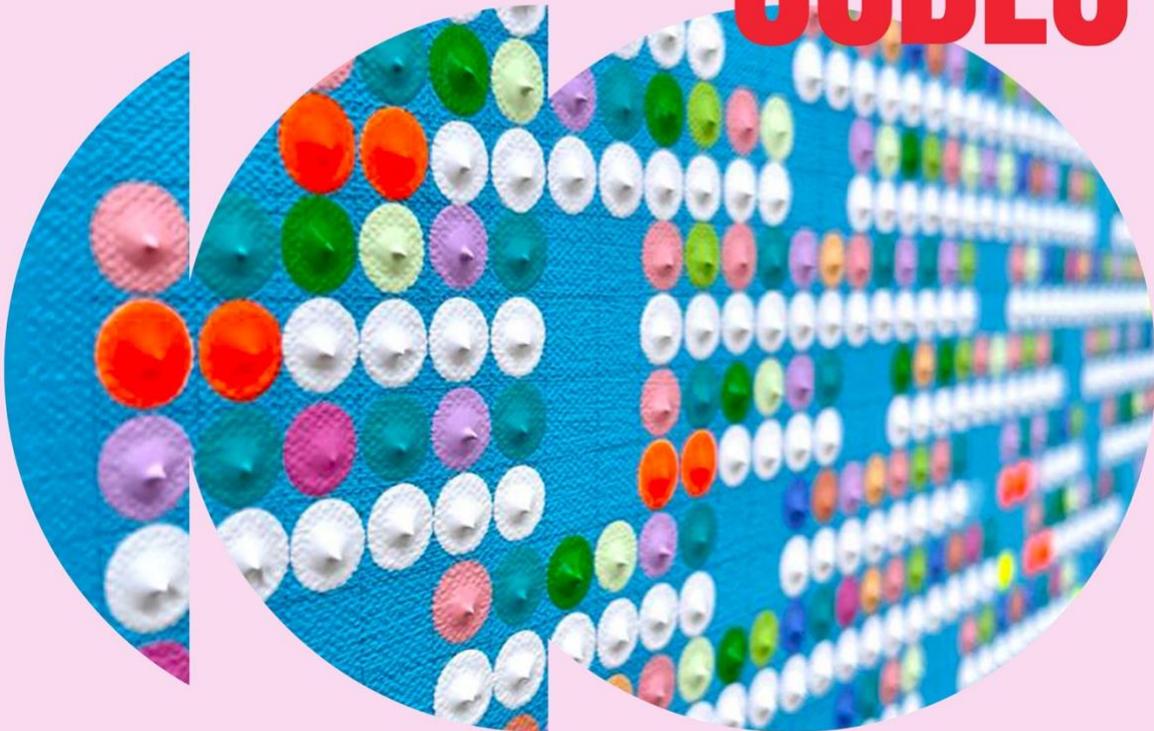


FIRETTI
CONTEMPORARY

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07.09 - 07.10.23
BY
JOSH
ROWELL

MORAL CODES



CURATED BY CELINE AZEM

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Firetti Contemporary presents the first solo exhibition of Josh Rowell in the Middle East, titled **MORAL CODES** and curated by Celine Azem. The exhibition presents a thought-provoking trajectory of Rowell's work, featuring his renowned series such as "Painting Language," "Virtually Fragile," and "Mosaics." Opening on the 7th of September 2023, this exhibition delves into the realms of ethics, communication, and the evolving digital landscape, inviting viewers to contemplate the moral codes that shape our society.

At the heart of the exhibition lies an installation of Rowell's *Painting Language* series, inspired by Aesop's fables. These timeless tales, originating from ancient Greece, have traversed cultures and generations, imparting valuable lessons and moral teachings. Rowell's interpretation of these fables serves as a poignant reminder of the enduring importance of moral values in today's world. Through his intricate and captivating artworks, he invites us to reflect on the significance of ethical principles in shaping our individual and collective actions.

Other works from the *Painting Language* series reflect on ancient mathematics and geometry. Rowell seamlessly merges art, technology, and language, blurring the boundaries between the digital and the tangible. By meticulously hand-painting passages of text, he creates intricate systems of color coding, symbolizing the complex coding systems that underlie our interconnected digital realm. These artworks not only explore the aesthetics of digital communication but also emphasize the value of the hand-made in an increasingly digitized world.

Venturing into the realm of the internet and its rapidly evolving culture, Rowell introduces us to his *Mosaics* series. These artworks draw inspiration from trending comments found on various social media platforms—comments that range from comical to bizarre, and sometimes even alarming. Just like comment memes that enjoy fleeting popularity before being replaced, these mosaics reflect the ephemerality of online phenomena. Through their creation, Rowell invites us to ponder the archaeological nature of social media feeds, unearthing forgotten fragments that offer a glimpse into the ever-changing landscape of internet discourse.

Lastly, Rowell's *Virtually Fragile* series sheds light on the fragility of our digital connectivity. These artworks capture the pivotal moment when our connection to the virtual world is severed, plunging us into a realm of abstract chaos. By depicting the loss of connectivity and the disarray that ensues, Rowell prompts us to contemplate our dependence on the digital realm and the potential consequences of its disruption.

MORAL CODES questions and explores ethics, connectivity, and the intricate tapestry of our digital existence. Rowell invites us to engage with these profound themes and embark on a journey of introspection, challenging the moral codes that govern our lives.

JOSH ROWELL BIOGRAPHY



Born in 1990 in Kent, England, Josh Rowell graduated from Kingston Art School in 2013, where he received a first class BFA with honours. Following a course in Art Criticism at Central Saint Martins college, Rowell returned to Kingston Art School for an MFA in 2015, where he was awarded a first- class distinction.

Rowell generates his artistic vision by focusing on technological advances that shape our contemporary lives, communicating our increasingly mediated human interactions within the confines of visual art. The artist balances analogue techniques with the instantaneous nature of the digital age. This juxtaposition produces a language that explores and reshapes information, and celebrates the hand-made in a time that is increasingly being enveloped by the virtual.

Since his emergence as an abstract painter, Rowell has expanded to sculpture, mixed media, and often times works with light, video, and sound installations. Despite these disparate media, everything is underpinned by a coding system, “everything can be reduced to a molecular binarism where all systems can be simplified to yes/no decisions,” the artist explains.

Mirroring the proliferation associated with the technological advancements these codes can generate, Rowell paints a vernacular, as evident by his “Painting Language” series, far more

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complex and carrying greater levels of information than a traditional one-zero binary. The language of colour, pattern, and form, is seen as dots laboriously covering canvases. These sequences, which the artist developed himself, read as a codified statement to create new forms of visual text that explore the possibilities and boundaries of expression and information.

The artists works have been exhibited in London, New York, Miami, Seattle, Basel, Hong Kong and Mexico and his works are part of public collections including the Uffizi Gallery in Florence, the Gregorian Foundation in Washington, London Kingston University's contemporary art collection, and the Matilda collection in San Miguel De Allende. In 2017/18 he had his first museum exhibition at the Palacio Nacional de Guatemala. Rowell won the Public Choice award at the VIA Arts Prize 2017, and was included in Future Now, the yearly publication by Aesthetica listing the 100 most exciting emerging artists of the year. In 2019 he was selected for the Royal Academy Summer Exhibition, London. In 2020 he was named joint winner of the Dentons Art Prize and was invited to participate in 'False Memory', a group exhibition at Rugby At Museum curated by Lindsay Seers.

Rowell has works in private collections as well, in the UK, USA, Canada, China, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, Switzerland, Holland, Monte Carlo, Australia, Ireland, Russia, Kuwait, Bermuda, Hungary, Japan, Mexico, and Peru.