



JEREMY HOUGHTON

FAST AND FEARLESS

Hannah Norman meets Jeremy Houghton, an artist who likes to live and work on the edge

For those who like to live life close to the edge, there is simply no better place to witness the power and danger of hard-line sports. For contemporary sporting artist Jeremy Houghton, being on the edge is the best place to be. From racing cars to speed boats, there isn't much that hasn't featured in his repertoire, which covers some of the most spectacular sporting feats of man versus machine.

Houghton is covering the epic Race Against Time, following the three-man team attempting to cross from the North Pole to the Canadian coastline. As the ice becomes too thin to cross, these resilient explorers will only have 35 days to cover 470 nautical miles of floating sea ice. When photography falls short, Houghton's job will be to record this incredible journey, to reflect the sheer determination inevitably required. His style of art lends itself to replicating the extremes of the harsh icy landscapes, due in part to the technique he employs to produce his paintings. The images take on different forms depending on where you stand to look at them, with the subjects often floating in and out of abstraction. From a few feet back, there are definite outlines to the forms within the painting. Up close, the brushstrokes are more abstract and appear almost random. It's a fitting technique for another of Houghton's more recent commissions - to produce the official collection of paintings for the James Hunt Foundation, to mark the 40th anniversary of the legendary racing driver's Formula One World Championship in 1976.

However, it's not just the high-octane adventure of extreme sporting action that captures Houghton's attention, a revelation made apparent through his current residency as the first ever Artist in Residence on the Goodwood estate for Lord March. "The estate has both a public perception and a private side," Houghton said. "During a residency, I can sit on the fence and observe both. At Goodwood,

there are the noisy times when the big events are taking place but I am also interested in the down-time, when the park is quieter.

Art and sport have, of course, always been intrinsically linked and Houghton's latest commission is possibly one of the most exciting yet. As Land Rover Ben Ainslie Racing's artist in residence for the America's Cup, Houghton spends one week per month at the team's home in Portsmouth before he heads to Bermuda in 2017 to attend at least one of the Louis Vuitton America's Cup World Series events. "The light, the spray, the movement and the speed mean the artistic possibilities of sailing are endless," Houghton enthused. "I think life off the boat is just as important as life on it. There's a massive team backing-up the five guys on the boat and it takes a lot of blood, sweat, tears, perseverance and hard work to get them to the final. I really want to make sure I represent the people who design and build the boats, as well as those who sail them," he added.

It's this sense of being able to go behind the scenes that appeals to Houghton. Throughout his residencies, he has positioned himself at the edge of the action, as an unobserved observer, just on the outside of the very inside. "This liminal positioning - behind the closed doors - has made me realise that on a day-to-day level, perception can be far removed from reality," he explained. Perhaps this is the reason why Houghton has not only been chosen for some truly prestigious residencies but why he has also become a very collectible artist of his generation.

For further information, visit the website: www.jeremyhoughton.co.uk.

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