

NINO MIER GALLERY

NEW YORK | BRUSSELS

JONATHAN WATERIDGE



CONTENTS

BIOGRAPHY 1

SAMPLE WORKS 3

SELECTED PROJECTS AND EXHIBITIONS 28

SELECTED PRESS 64

CURRICULUM VITAE 81

An abstract portrait painting featuring a face rendered in soft, blended tones of white, cream, and pale yellow. The face is set against a background of broad, textured brushstrokes in shades of ochre, olive, and dark brown. The overall style is expressive and painterly, with visible brushwork and a sense of depth. The word "BIOGRAPHY" is centered over the face in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

BIOGRAPHY

JONATHAN WATERIDGE

b. 1972, Lusaka, ZM

Lives and works in Norfolk, UK



Jonathan Wateridge is best known for his paintings that depict spectral, isolated men and women who blend in and out of their poolside environments. The series initially explored economic and racial tensions in postcolonial Zambia, witnessed by a young Wateridge most poignantly in and around pools. Early paintings in this body of work featured adroit representations of figures emanating foreboding auras of decadence, atomization, and social discordance, based on large sets built by the artist, and populated with figure models. More recently, he has developed a formal language to more deeply explore figures that often seem isolated, interrupted, or unsure of themselves - figures, in other words, who occupy a world that is no longer guaranteed or available to them.

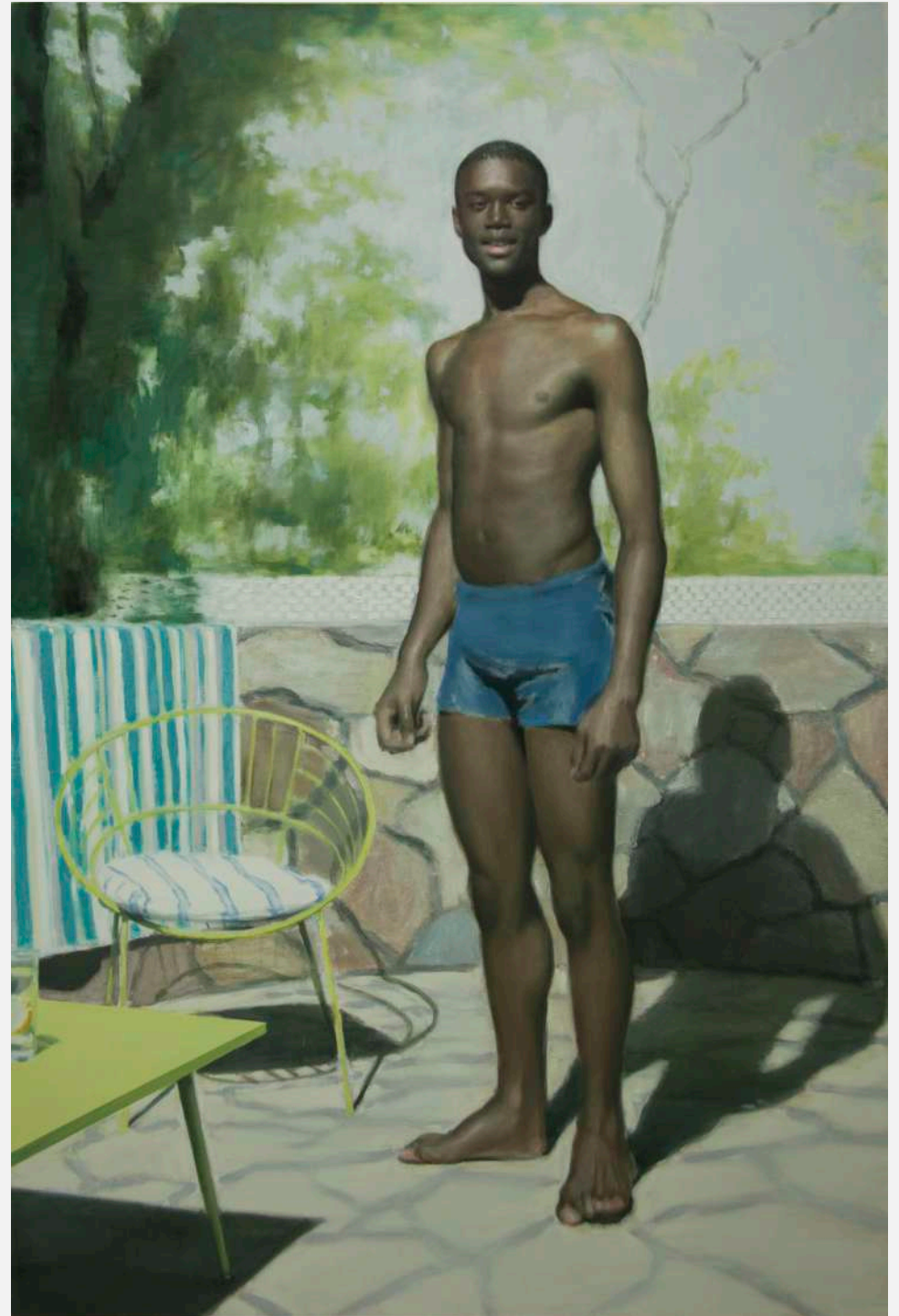
The formal and expressive aspects of Wateridge's style have come to the fore in recent years, as he pushes the tension between realist elements and a sense of the cinematic with the visual grammars of modernism. Each painting is heavily worked, sometimes taking multiple years to complete, and such changes are becoming increasingly visible on the surface of the canvases. This more fluid and expressive process has now superseded his previous affinity for building sets and hiring models; the staged theater of his earlier work is now contained in the very making of the paintings themselves.

Jonathan Wateridge (b. 1972, Lusaka, ZM; lives and works in Norfolk, UK) will have multiple recently acquired works exhibited as a solo presentation at the Aïshti Foundation in 2022. The artist has most recently exhibited with the Hayward Gallery, London; T.J. Boulting, London; Galerie Haas, Zurich; Pace Gallery and HENI, London. Wateridge's work is in the collections of institutions worldwide, including Aïshti Foundation, Lebanon; Pinault Foundation, Venice; the Saatchi Collection, London; the Rennie Collection, Vancouver; and Simmons & Simmons, London.

An abstract painting featuring thick, expressive brushstrokes in various shades of green, blue, and white. The composition is dynamic, with swirling and layered colors that create a sense of movement and depth. The text 'SAMPLE WORKS' is centered over the middle of the image in a clean, white, sans-serif font.

SAMPLE WORKS

**sample selection does not necessarily reflect availability*

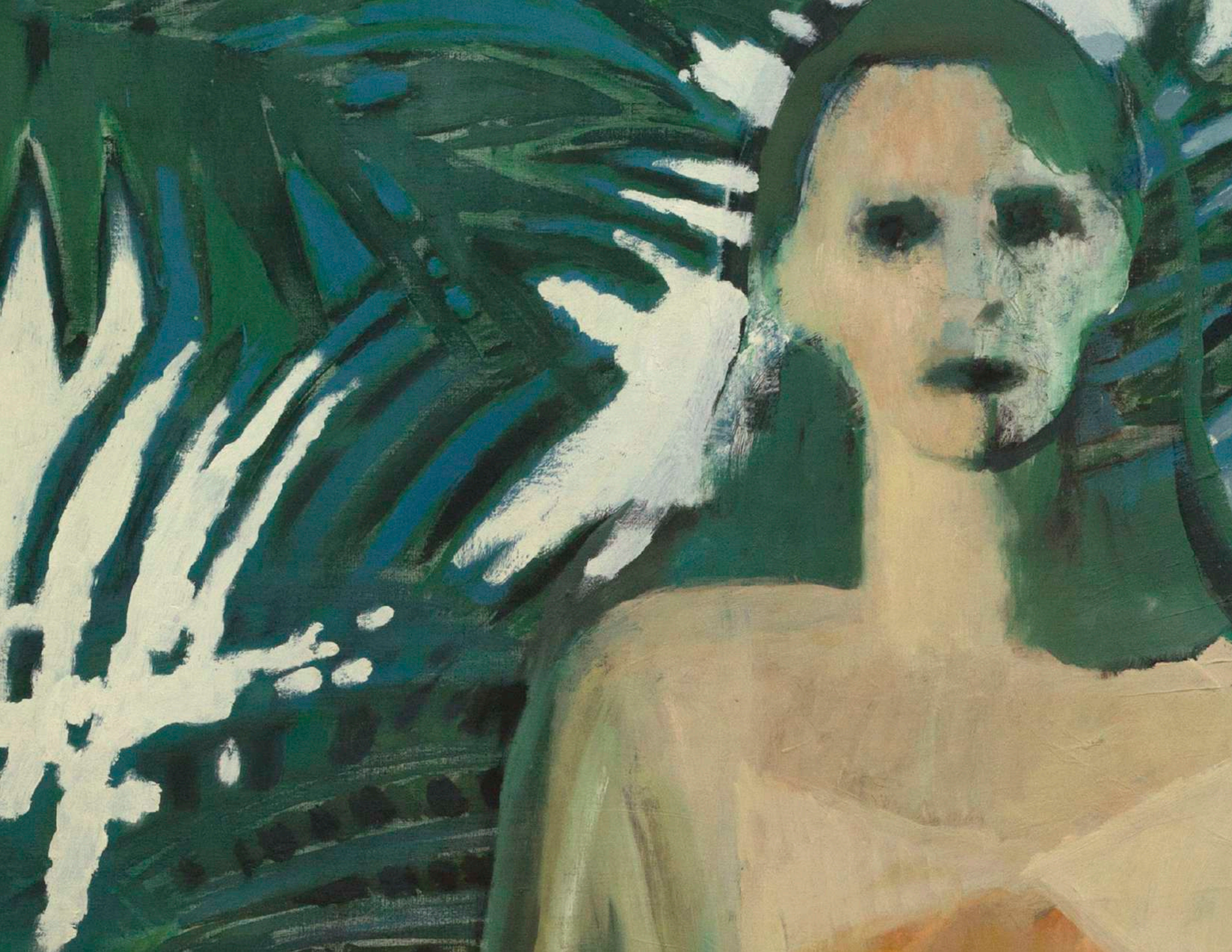


Standing Swimmer, 2017
Oil on linen
88 5/8 x 59 1/8 in
225 x 150 cm
(JWA21.065)

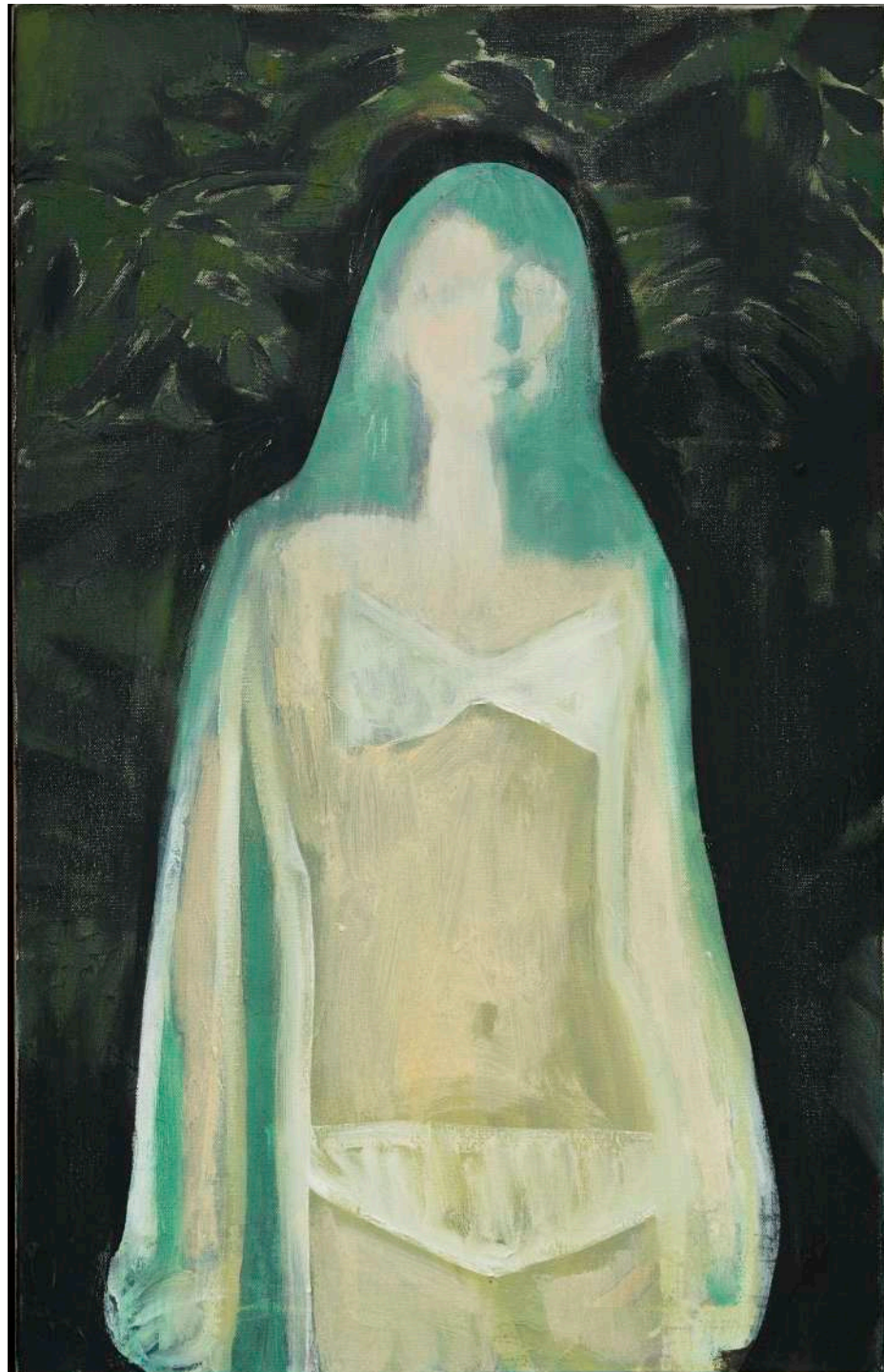




Garden Pool, 2022
Oil on linen
78 3/4 x 59 1/8 in
200 x 150 cm
(JWA22.005)



Study for Garden Pool, 2022
Oil on canvas
30 3/8 x 19 1/8 x 2 1/2 in (framed)
77.2 x 48.3 x 6.5 cm (framed)
(JWA22.033)





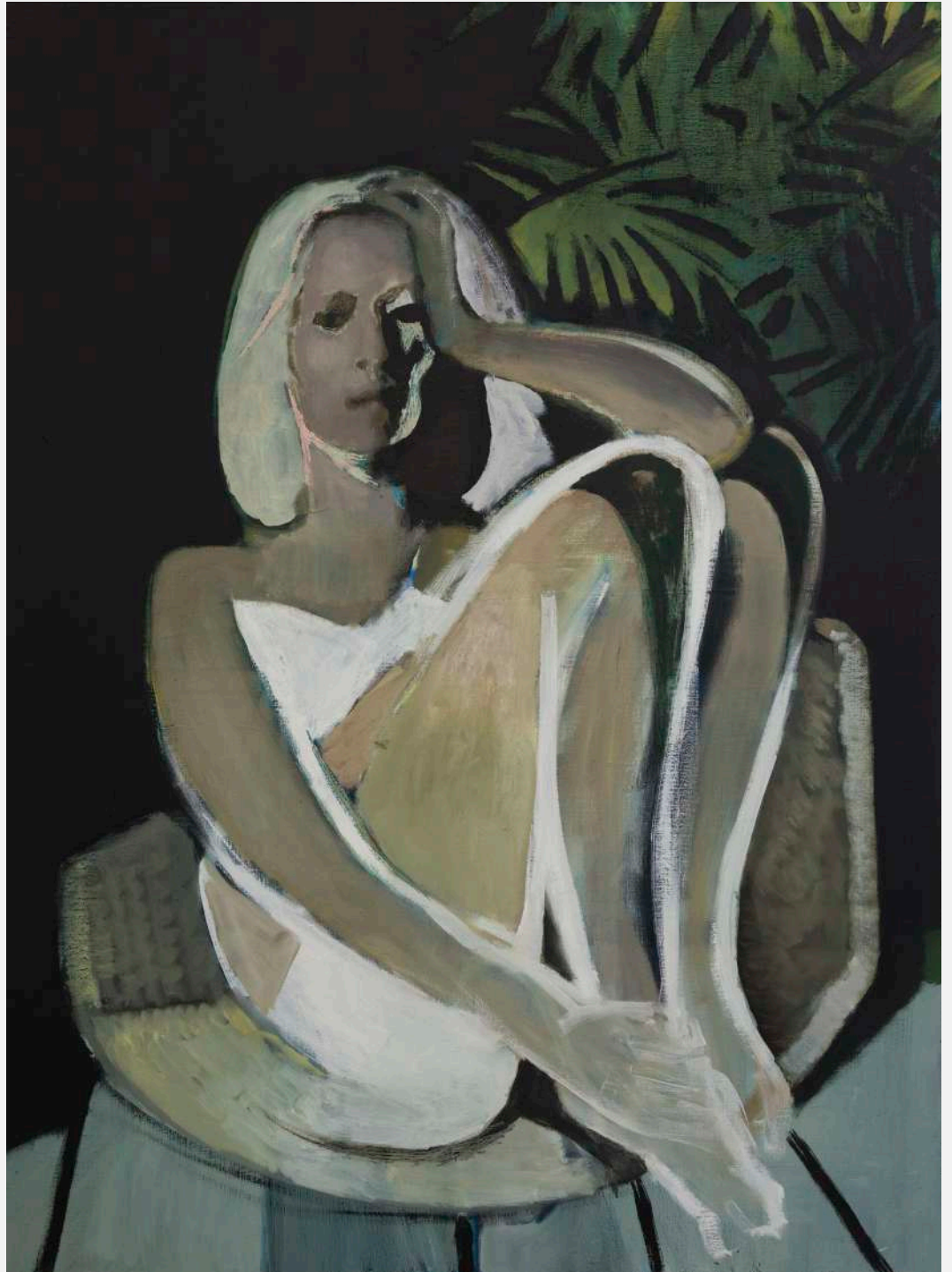
Yellow Curtain, 2022
 Oil on paper
 16 3/8 x 13 3/4 x 1 5/8 in (framed)
 41.7 x 34.8 x 4 cm (framed)
 (JWA22.068)



Lamplight, 2022
 Oil on Paper
 16 3/8 x 13 3/4 x 1 5/8 in (framed)
 41.7 x 34.8 x 4 cm (framed)
 (JWA22.071)

Figure on a Lounger, 2022, Oil on paper, 15 1/8 x 16 1/8 x 1 5/8 in (framed), 38.5 x 40.7 x 4 cm (framed), (JWA22.060)



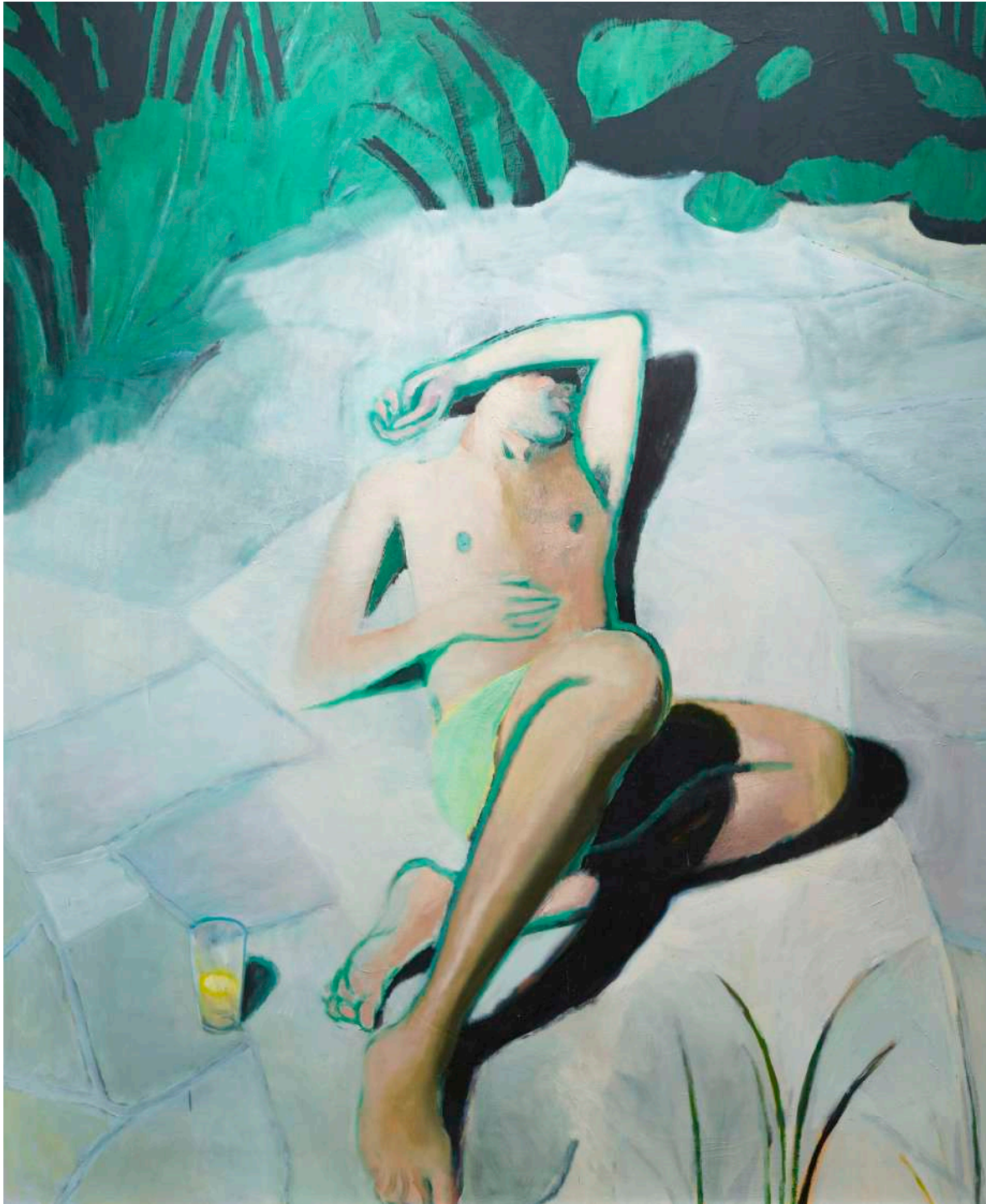


Night Terrace, 2022
Oil on Linen
53 1/2 x 40 1/8 in
136 x 102 cm
(JWA22.004)



Sunbather in Shade, 2022, Oil on paper, 15 x 18 1/2 x 1 5/8 in (framed), 38 x 47 x 4 cm (framed), (JWA22.061)

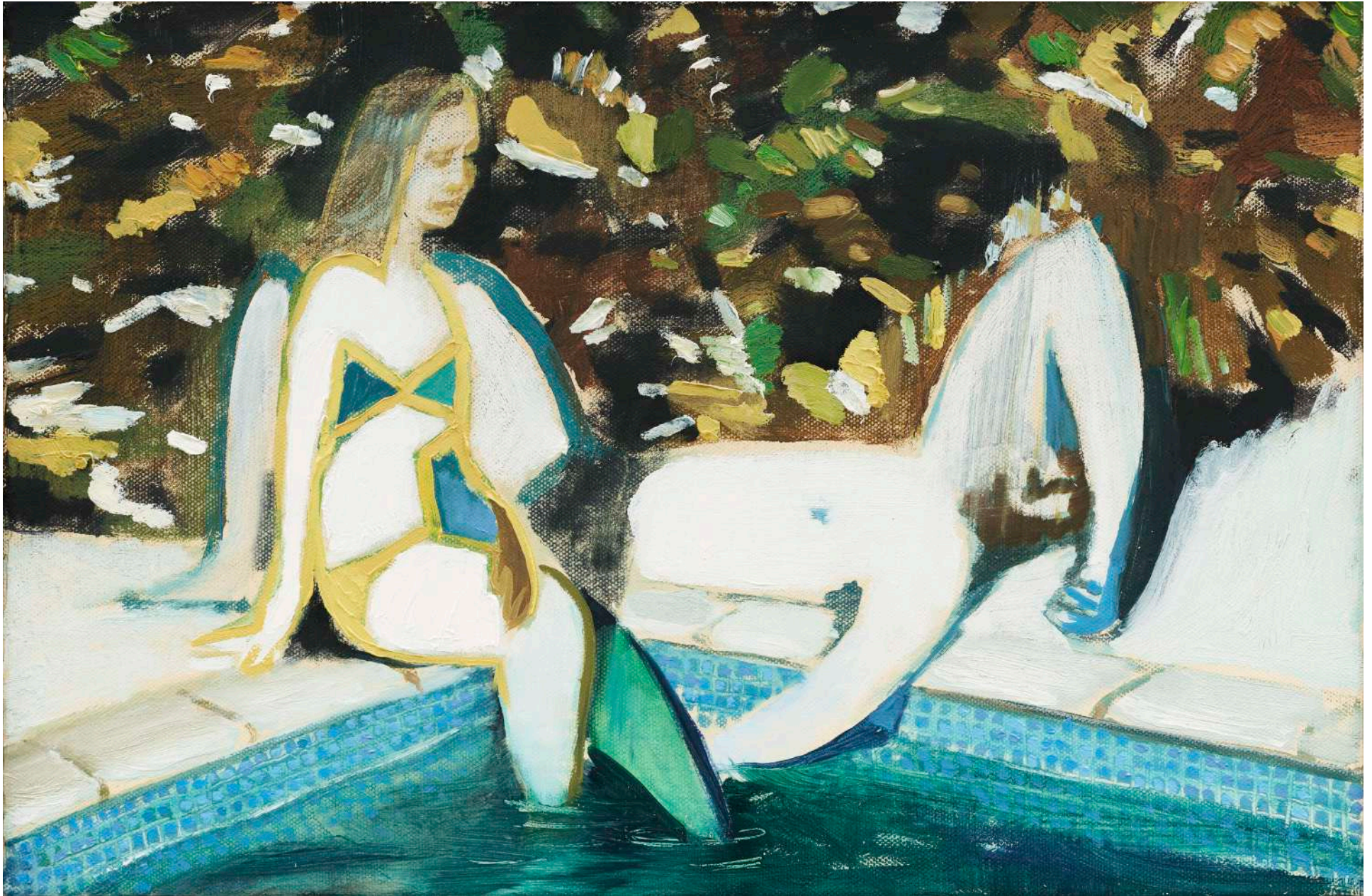




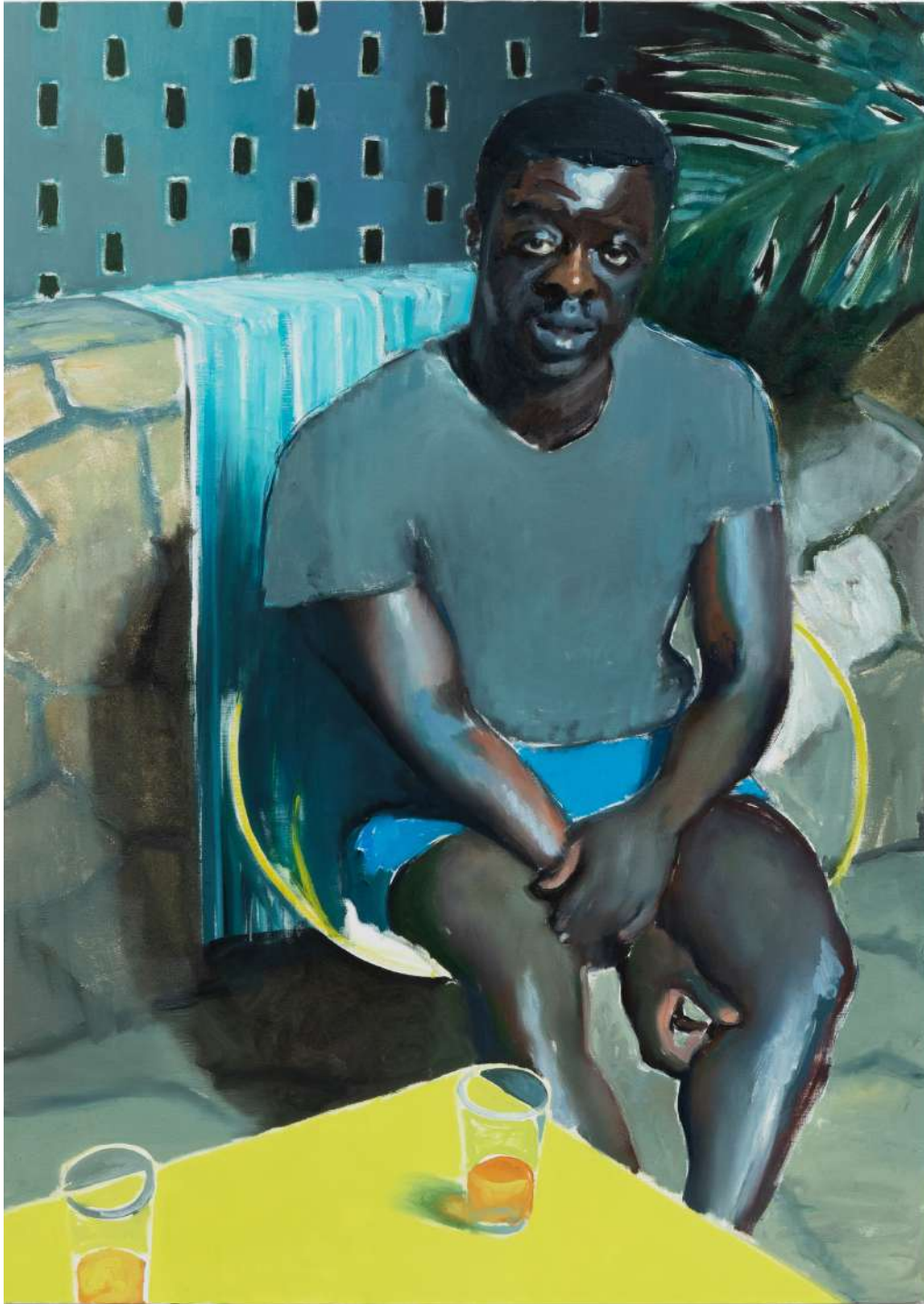
Habitus, 2019
Oil on linen
94 1/2 x 78 3/4 in
240 x 200 cm
(JWA21.046)

Night Lilo, 2018
Oil on linen
68 7/8 x 61 1/8 in
175 x 155 cm
(JWA20.007)



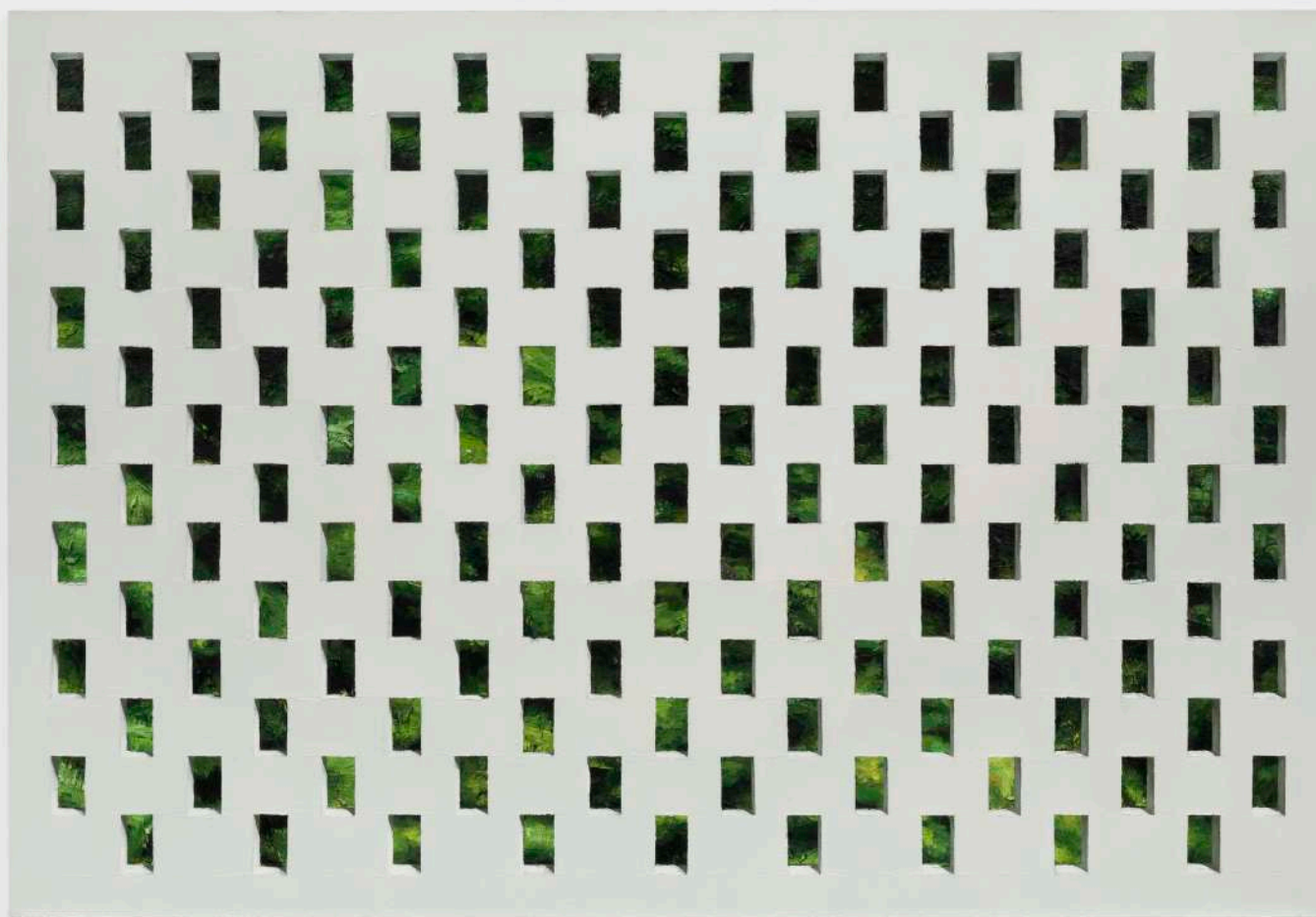


Figures by Pool, 2022
Oil on Canvas
12 5/8 x 18 3/4 x 2 1/2 in (framed)
32 x 47.5 x 6.5 cm (framed)
(JWA22.043)



Garden Pool, 2022
Oil on linen
78 3/4 x 59 1/8 in
200 x 150 cm
(JWA22.005)





Wall, 2016
Oil on linen
59 1/8 x 88 5/8 in
150 x 225 cm
(JWA21.060)





Thorns, 2018
Oil on canvas
53 1/8 x 35 3/8 in
135 x 90 cm
(JWA21.054)



Swimmers, 2018
Oil on linen
88 5/8 x 110 1/4 in
225 x 280 cm
(JWA21.049)

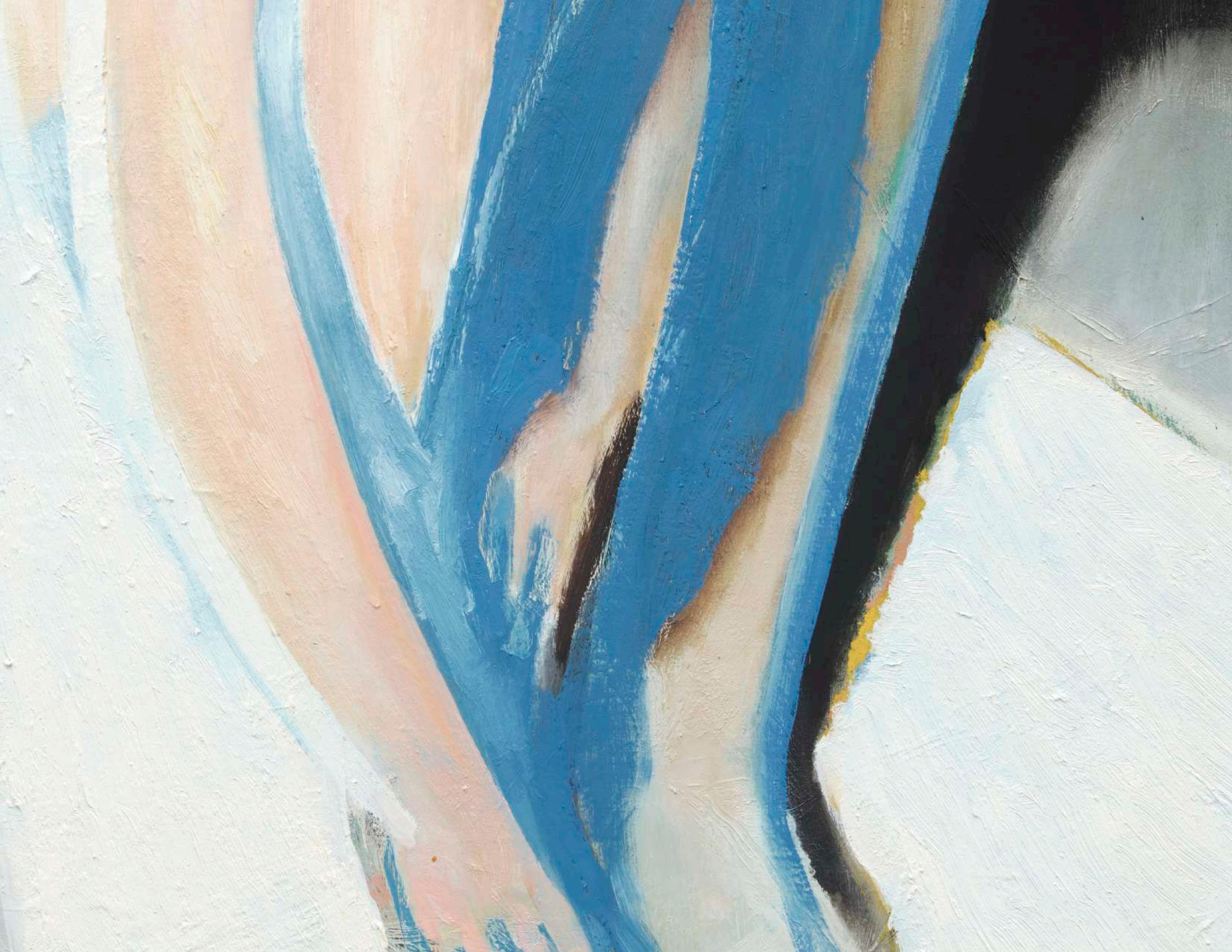




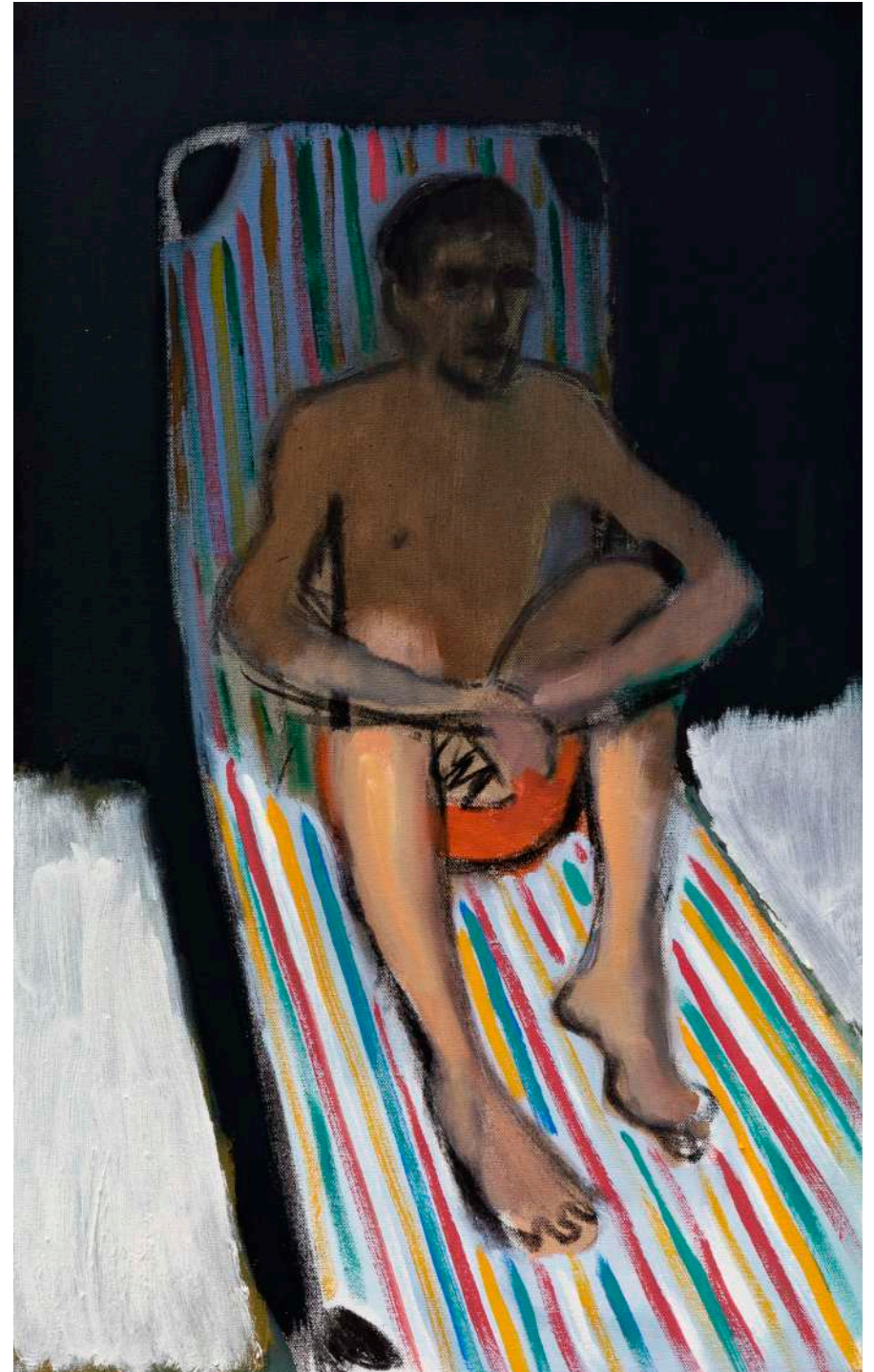
Sunbleached, 2022
Oil on linen
72 x 51 1/8 in
183 x 130 cm
(JWA22.102)



Blue swimmer, 2022
Oil on canvas
39 3/8 x 29 1/2 in
100 x 75 cm
(JWA22.110)



Shade, 2020
Oil on linen
23 5/8 x 17 3/4 in
60 x 45 cm
(JWA20.016)



An abstract painting featuring bold, expressive brushstrokes. The composition is dominated by dark green and black tones on the left and right sides, with a central area of bright blue and white. The brushwork is thick and textured, creating a sense of movement and depth. The overall effect is dramatic and moody.

SELECTED EXHIBITONS AND PROJECTS

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS

VANISHING POINT

2025
GRIMM
LONDON, UK

AFTERPARTY

2023
NINO MIER GALLERY
NEW YORK, NY

AFTERSUN

2022
NINO MIER GALLERY
BRUSSELS, BE

INLAND WATER

2021
NINO MIER GALLERY
LOS ANGELES, CA

THIS SIDE OF PARADISE

2020
TJ BOULTING
LONDON, UK

ENCLAVE

2016
PACE GALLERY | HENI
LONDON, UK

GRIMM

VANISHING POINT

2025
GRIMM
LONDON, UK

All images courtesy of the artist and GRIMM, Amsterdam | London | New York.
Photography by Jackson Pearce White.

GRIMM is delighted to present *Vanishing Point*, an exhibition of new paintings by Jonathan Wateridge on view at the London gallery from February 27 to April 5, 2025. This is the artist's first solo exhibition since joining the gallery last year, and his first solo presentation in London in five years. A new publication will be published to accompany the exhibition.

Often depicting isolated figures, in both interior and exterior spaces, Wateridge's canvases evoke a duality of familiarity and strangeness. In recent years, Wateridge has reinvented his visual language, presenting a distinctive vision that combines high-modern formalism with echoes of the cinematic. In contrast to the modelled realism of his earlier works, his current figures appear ghost-like and charged with feelings of disquiet and uncertainty.

In *Figure Running*, a glowing figure is shown to be in motion within an indeterminate ground. As though caught in the dazzling glare of searchlight, the besuited man seemingly sprints, his arms and legs reduced to their essential form within a blurry haze. The swarming void around him appears ready to engulf its next victim; the indeterminate nature of this transitional space adding to the sense

of peril that pervades the scene.

Other locations from which Wateridge's figures emerge seem quintessentially mid-century Los Angeles, yet suffused with a sense of the uncanny; as if a set builder had created their own versions of John Lautner, Rudolf Schindler or Richard Neutra: all glass partition and sweeping driveway.

Architectural access and threshold becomes a motif here, whether the crunch of coarse gravel or the sheen of poured concrete and stone. Often Wateridge's subjects become enmeshed within these environments; bodies are both flattened by and sculpturally occupy the pictorial space. Legs are summarily severed at the shin or ankle, suggesting the figure is immovably cast forever into the ground below or whose feet of clay are now broken or dissolved. As people and settings become materialised through paint, they appear at once to be dematerialising as tangible things. They are frequently captured in a state of flux, perennial moments in which they are dissolving and re-appearing, as if caught in a disquieting dream.

In *Blind*, the nude is at once enveloped within the vertical stripes and yet still

casts a shadow upon them. The blinds start with bright greens, yellows and ochres, reminiscent of the fauna on the table in the foreground and the cool tones of glass, before darkening to greys and blues as they progress to the right, absorbed into a cool void.

In *Afterglow*, a figure looks back over her shoulder, as if upon or beyond the viewer, suggesting a danger that resides within the viewer's own environment. It is unclear if she is entering or fleeing the building before her. The cool blue of the figure's dress continues into her face, where the rabbit-in-headlights expression of mouth agape and furrowed brow is presented as a continuous form. The bleaching or total removal of flesh tones is reminiscent of the photographic technique of solarisation, in which dark and light tones are partially or fully inverted, giving the sense of a ghostly presence, its features hollowed out and disembodied. Often faces, as well

as other parts of the canvas, are also scraped back with sandpaper or palette knife, removing the texture of brushstrokes as a means of authorial negation, as though the faces have supplanted themselves on to the canvas independently. The resultant haze is at once ethereal and lustrous, as though the pigments are woven into the linen.

Throughout, the fluidity and indeterminate nature of Wateridge's subjects instils within them a sense of existential solitude. Any certainty that has previously been available to them is no longer there. These atomised and translucent beings are seamlessly interrupted by or absorbed into their affluent environments, inviting contemplation on the social relationship between these figures and the fragile insecurity of their world.











AFTERPARTY

2023

NINO MIER GALLERY
NEW YORK, NY

Nino Mier Gallery is pleased to present *Afterparty*, the gallery's third solo exhibition with UK-based artist Jonathan Wateridge. The exhibition features paintings that are situated within the construct of an aspirational, affluent anyplace, where formally distressed figures appear haunted by the threat of their own disappearance. *Afterparty* will be on view in the Soho gallery from September 6 - October 21, 2023.

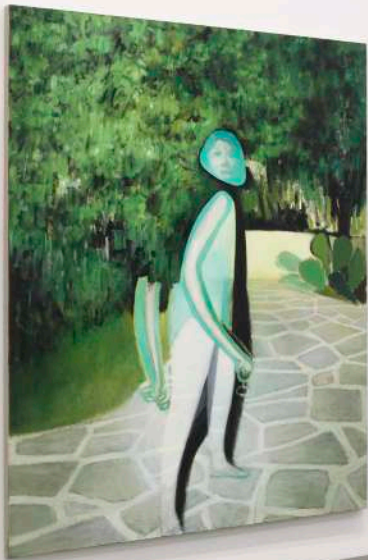
In *Afterparty*'s anguished phantasia, liminal, sometimes translucent figures flicker and fade throughout halls, terraces, and pathways. Men and women are captured mid-movement, either surprised by the painter's intervention or unaware of it entirely. Their mask-like faces regard the viewer beseechingly, or else they lethargically melt into chairs, couches and beds. Often reduced to a series of expressionistic gestures, their bodies succumb to the voracious maw of their surrounding environments. For instance, in *Host* (all works 2023), a woman stands on a manicured walkway, her ghostlike legs revealing the stones behind them, and her neck and left arm partially replaced by the foliage encircling her. A fulgent glow vibrates around many of the figures' contours, enhancing the sense that they are spectral: between the viewer's world, the world of the painting, and yet another, ethereal world of dematerialized formlessness.

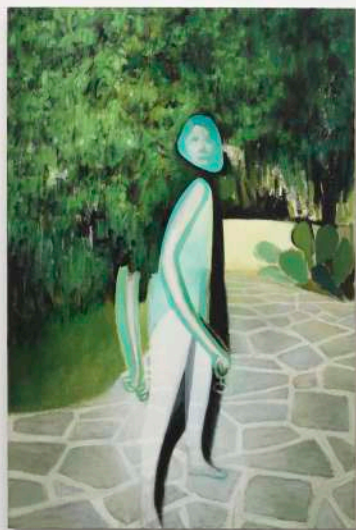
Afterparty is a development of the thematic and formal concerns explored in *Aftersun*, which the artist exhibited at our Brussels gallery last year. In *Afterparty*, Wateridge moves his subjects away from the poolside scenes they inhabited for the past six years, instead immersing them in adjacent garden spaces and interiors of modernist homes. Glass surfaces of midcentury architecture supplant the pool as a motif of inverted good life optimism, instead crystallizing the social and class anxieties that subtend such notions of prosperity. While, in *Aftersun*, the pool was a signifier of social exclusion, in *Afterparty*, glass acts as an unseen boundary or screen, reflecting and obscuring as much as it reveals.

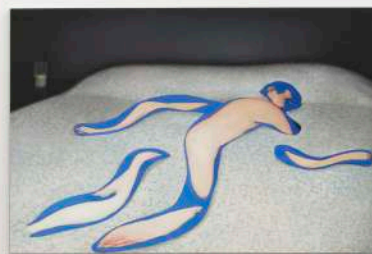
Formally, *Afterparty* negotiates a collision between modernist visual grammars and cinematic pictorial spaces. Many features of the paintings' settings – the trees and paneling in *Open House*, the rain dotting the windowpanes in *Downpour* – impart a filmic realism, characteristic of Wateridge's earlier work, to the paintings. However, Wateridge's semi-abstracted figures jar against these backdrops. Juxtaposed with their more faithfully rendered environments, the splintered figures function as a formal interruption. Additionally, the paintings' surfaces suffer varying degrees of attrition, having been scraped in some passages and sanded down in others. Yet other areas are crusted over with formations of excess paint, a palimpsestic byproduct of Wateridge's revisions playing across the paintings' surfaces. Wateridge's effacement of form and surface points to the effacement of his figures' unstable social formations.

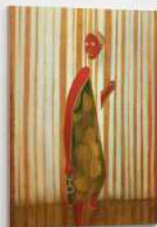
As with past work by Wateridge, the figures in *Afterparty* are engulfed by threat, their quiet terror of decadent decline materializing through their fragmented forms. But this new body of work develops a new kind of daylight horror, a menacing aesthetic that issues from the banality of daytime, from light and visibility rather than from shadowed obscurity. In *Glasshouse*, a man stands behind a sliding glass door, his forearm disconnected from the rest of his body, and his neck obscured by the reflection of a tree on the opposite side of glass. The man's tall stature and posture are jeopardized, a condition that is augmented by his body's formal incompleteness. Here, glass – a material that normally imparts greater clarity – reflects light in a way that shrouds what lies on the other side of the divide.

The fractured forms that characterize the figure in *Glasshouse* are echoed throughout the other works in the exhibition, whether the figures are separated from the viewer by glass or not. In *Bedspreed*, for instance, a man lies languidly on a made bed, his limbs disconnected from his torso as though he were melting into the fabric beneath. And in *Red Curtain*, a woman's hollowed out eyes reveal the fabric curtains behind her, transforming her face into a floating mask. The figures' bodies are therefore reduced to surfaces themselves, though they are markedly less stable than those of their surrounding interiors to which they cling so tightly.













AFTERSUN

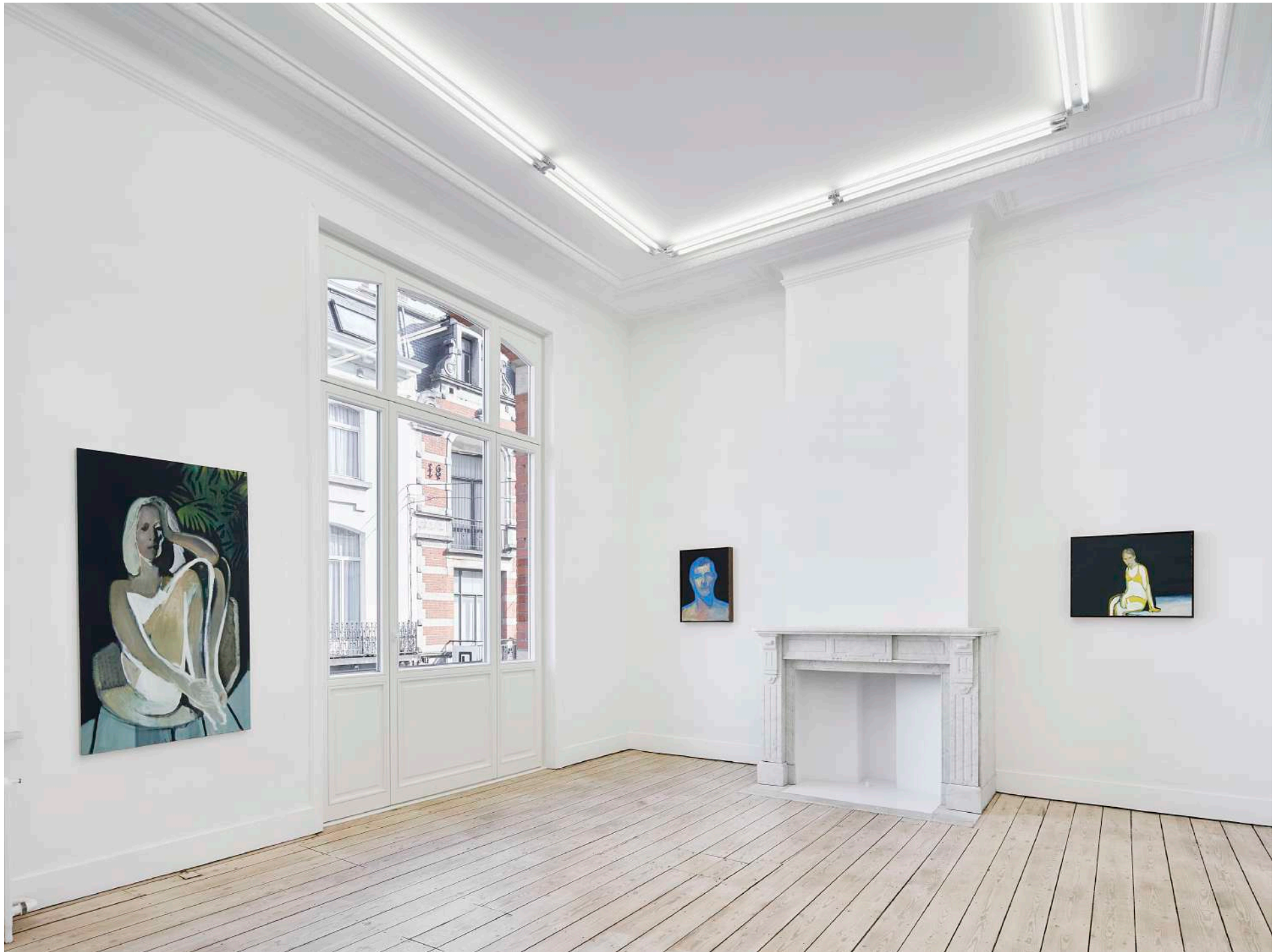
2022
NINO MIER GALLERY
BRUSSELS, BE

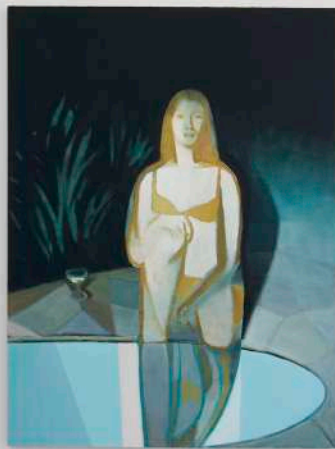
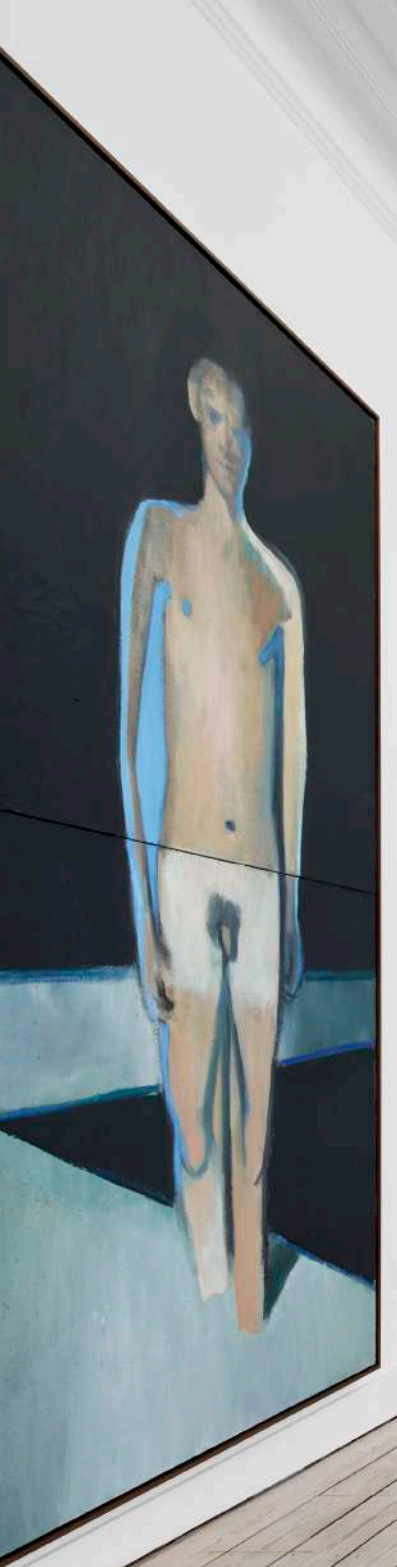
A haunted phantasmagoria pervades Jonathan Wateridge's *Aftersun*. Spectral, isolated men and women blend in and out of their poolside environments, gritty faces look past us with obscure intensity, and phosphorescent, glowing bodies loom overhead. Shadowy, sensual figures appear and disappear throughout the paintings in this exhibition, their surfaces partially eroded as if vestiges of a bygone past. The exhibition hovers in the liminal realm between public and private, the actual and the fantasied. The familiar is estranged in this representation of a life of leisure in threatened decline.

The works in *Aftersun* are the latest installment in a series of poolside paintings for which Wateridge is well-known. The series initially explored economic and racial tensions in postcolonial Zambia, witnessed by a young Wateridge most poignantly in and around pools. Early paintings in this body of work featured adroit representations of figures emanating foreboding auras of decadence, atomization, and social discordance, based on large sets built by the artist and populated with figure models. The suite of works in *Aftersun* marks a departure from these earlier works, both formally and conceptually.

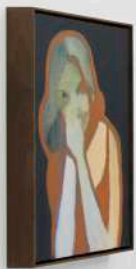
The insinuation of mediation and narrative within each painting is balanced with the immediacy of material and form. Each painting in the exhibition is heavily worked, creating a sense of materiality discordant with the spectrality of the figures within them. Wateridge notes that his paintings on canvas, which can evolve over many months, often have had as much paint taken off the canvas as has been applied to it. Likewise, his works on paper depict dreamlike, almost violently weathered subjects whose bodies are partially transparent, an effect achieved through sanding down the paper's surface. Such changes are visible on the surfaces of the works, which embrace moments wherein the limits of bodies and architectures are porous, incomplete, or indeterminate. *Aftersun* is the sunburn after the fever dream, the weakened body after heatstroke. Nightfall illuminates what has slipped away into formlessness as a disquieting atmosphere saturates this world. Wateridge's figures float around their private paradises like ghosts haunting a realm they don't quite belong to but remain entrapped by. Here, Wateridge registers a crisis in perception: his figures' eyeless faces look, but they cannot see.



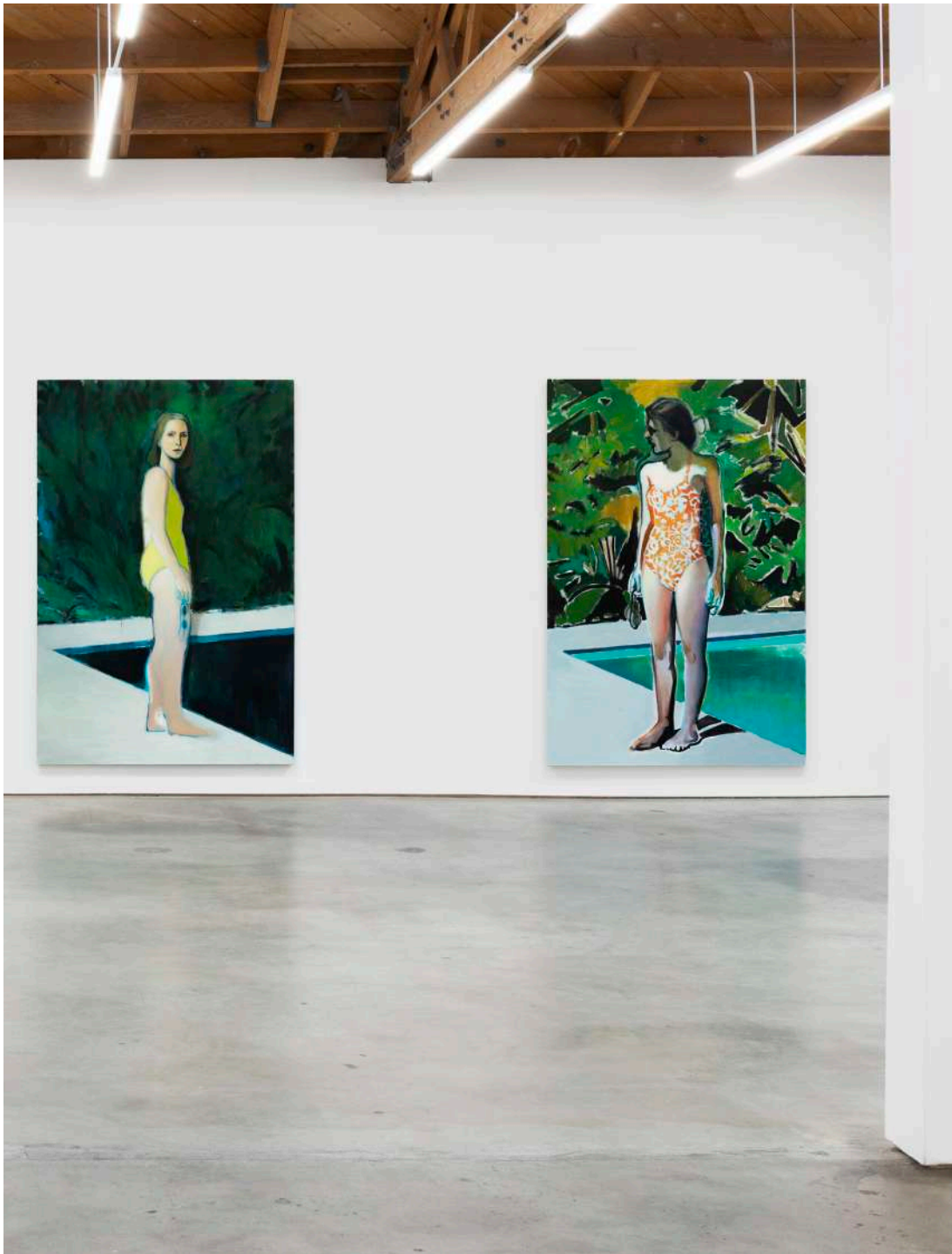












Inland Water

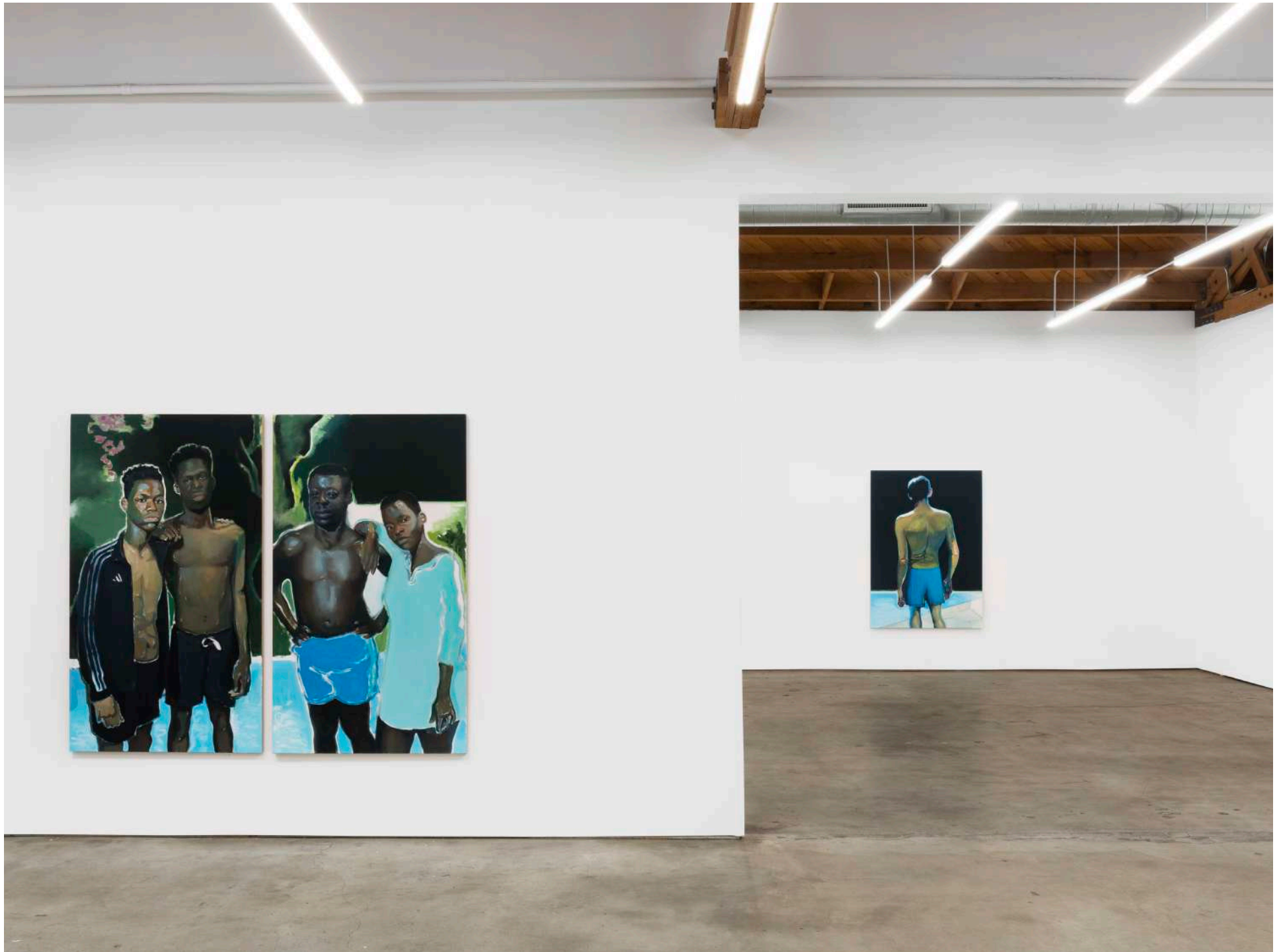
2021

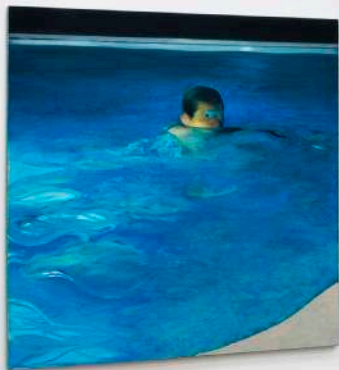
**NINO MIER GALLERY
LOS ANGELES, CA, US**

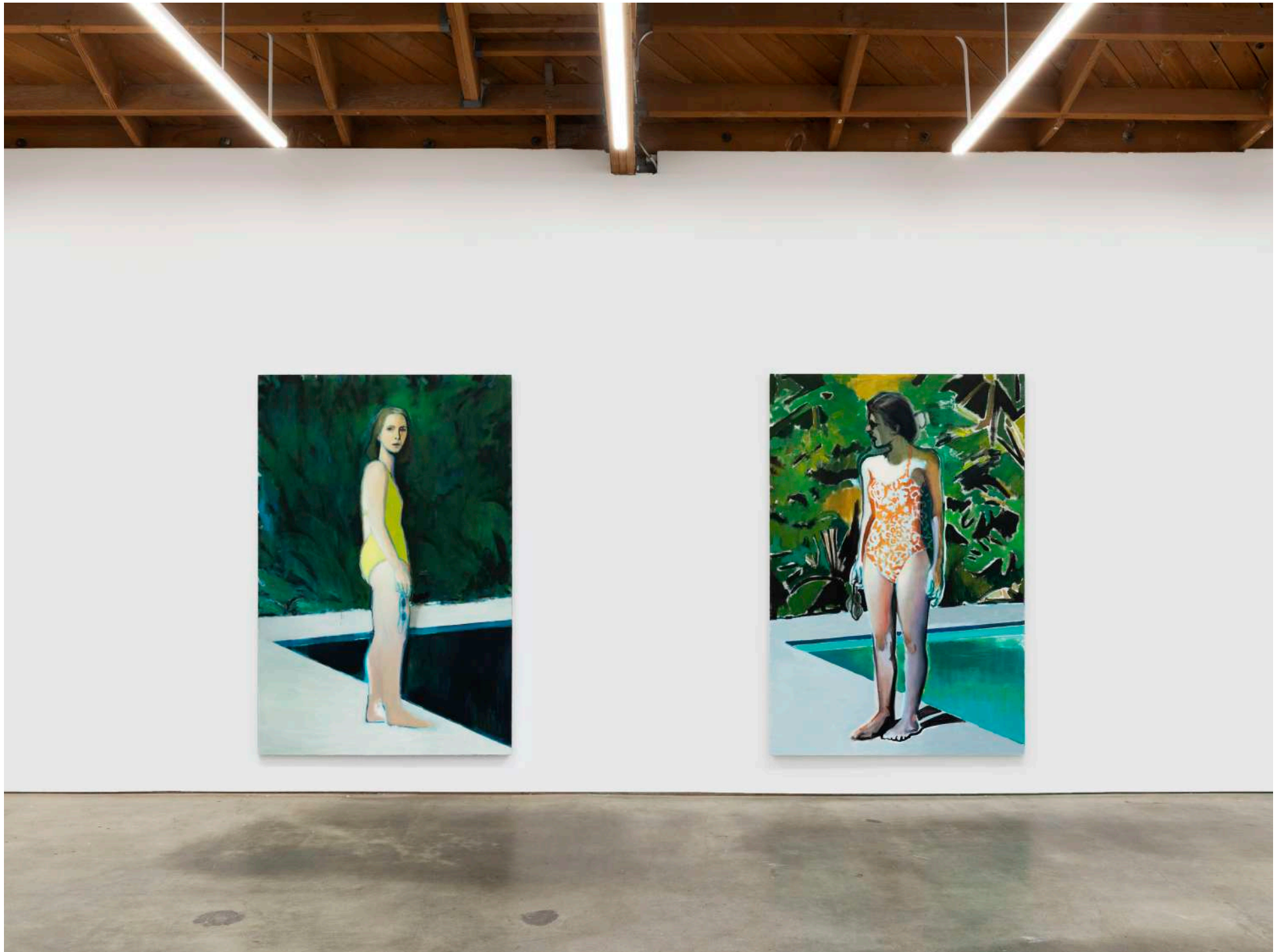
Inland Water presents a series of Wateridge's recent paintings through which the Zambian-born artist provides a glimpse into private and intimate scenes of poolside affluence visually echoing Wateridge's memories of his suburban upbringing during an era of immense racial and economic inequality in his birth country. While tied to the artist's own history, the imagery escapes the limits of personal narrative and geographic location as Wateridge's cinematic compositions establish a familiar and uncanny atmosphere permeating the façade of comfortable leisure. These painted depictions of exclusionary settings, and the socioeconomic disparity they inevitably suggest, are still equally present decades later in cities all over the world, including Los Angeles, where manmade boundaries such as walls and gates reinforce societal divisions by separating communities of wealth and privilege from members of society who lack the same resources as a result of systemic conditions.

Often confronting the viewer with a direct outward gaze, Wateridge's figures appear disconnected from their serene, seemingly quotidian, spaces as if being confronted by an intrusion into their insular environments, while, in some cases, being further separated from their immediate surroundings by the painterly contours delineating their own form. While each scene contains underpinnings of realism, the tenuous relationship between the subjects and their contrived private spheres points to the highly constructed nature of their existence. In each painting, Wateridge references staged scenes acted out by hired models on full-scale sets fabricated in his studio. The methodically produced foundations of each painting expand on Wateridge's role as a painter as his practice navigates aspects of both filmmaking and photography while allowing his painted narratives to realign with collectively understood aesthetics manufactured by visual media. Since 2019, Wateridge's paintings demonstrate an increasing separation from reality with a decided shift in style from the artist's earlier more realistic renderings. The scenes presented in *Inland Water* exhibit a coalescence of gestural brushstrokes, knife marks, and vivid colors that allow narratives rooted in memory to take on broader associations untethered from the specificity of their source.











THIS SIDE OF PARADISE

2020
TJ BOULTING
LONDON, UK

TJ Boulting, in association with Mark Sanders Art Consultancy, is proud to present *This Side of Paradise*, a series of new paintings by British artist Jonathan Wateridge.

The title of the show refers to F. Scott Fitzgerald's 1920 debut novel of the same title, which told of the downfall of its protagonist from wealth and privilege. Similarly in this series Wateridge presents a fall from paradise perceived through the backdrop of a swimming pool, the symbol of affluence, and the fulcrum around which all the works pivot. But where is this paradise, is it a reality or fiction, or both, and what does its fall represent?

We are first confronted with the pool itself, the painting eponymously titled *This Side of Paradise*, and already we are given warning signs that things are not quite what they seem. This is no idyllic poolside picture, there are no figures, the water is not crystalline but a dark swathe of blues and greens, psychologically charged and full of depth, more akin to the ocean with its connotations of fear and the unknown. Meaning here is generated as much by atmospherics as by content. Even the initial seduction of the soft light in the background landscape gives way to a wrought, scratchy surface of aggressive and jagged fronds.

Alongside the pool are similarly large-scale portraits of individual swimmers, standing but uncertain and interrupted, as if tense and alert to some impending sense of threat. A woman in a yellow swimming costume turns to us with an arresting stare: we have been caught looking, and we are no longer carefree voyeurs but left feeling uncomfortable as to what we have disturbed.

These large works were begun in late 2019, and demonstrate a paradigm shift in Wateridge's style of painting, with loose and suggestive brushstrokes and use of colour. The scrapes, sanding and range of marks by brush or knife echo certain formal aspects of early Modernism but which, crucially, carry other influences of narrative cinema and photography that imbue the paintings with a distinctive psychological charge. In *Night Swim* we see one eye peering out above the water, piercing our gaze with a barely defined smear of black paint; in *Late Swim* the shadows around the eyes and cheek of the middle-aged bather have been scraped and gouged away by the palette knife. The remaining electric greens reflected from the illuminated water render his face mask-like, the geometric, circular lines describing the curves of his towel evoking the distant echoes of a (now flaccid) Vitruvian Man.



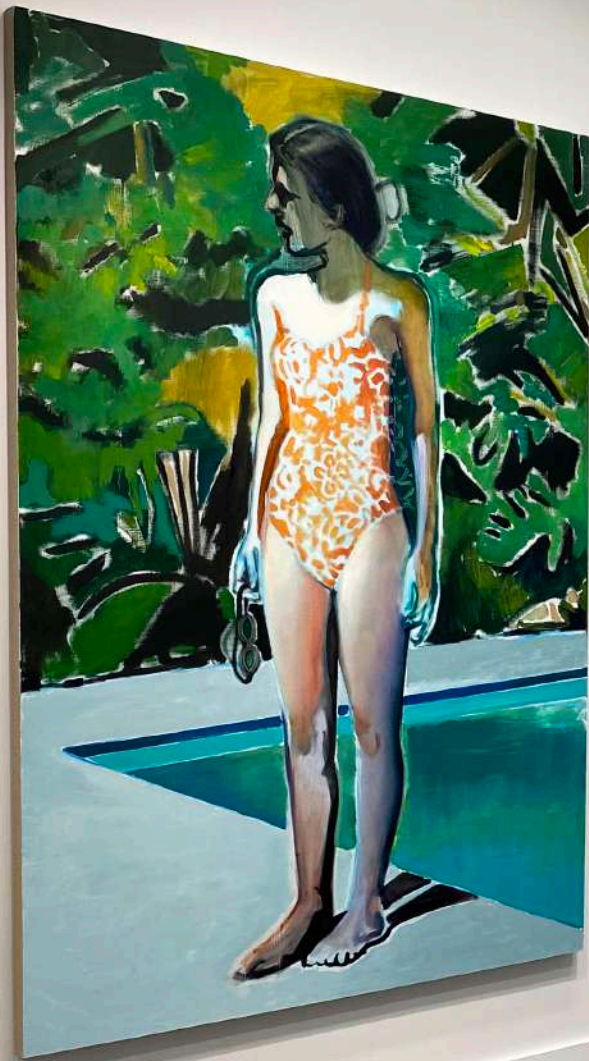
All images courtesy of TJ Boulting.

As we move to the second gallery, featuring smaller paintings made more recently this year, Wateridge escalates the unsettling atmosphere to a more extreme level. Here we are confronted with scene after scene of bodies collapsed by the pool, lying prostrate and inert, enervated and barely conscious. Collectively they present a deeply disturbing viewpoint, while a realisation dawns in what we are seeing. This is indeed no paradise, the poolside offers no privilege or respite; confounded, the figures create a cumulative feeling of unease and ennui. The body language implies they do not lie in comfort, we are reminded of shocking scenes that greeted visitors arriving post the Jonestown massacre; bodies strewn calmly, collectively, across the landscape. This is the other side of paradise. It is disturbing but also strangely familiar, our collective memory forged by our interconnected world. The swimming pool here is our warning sign. But as with many allegories, it serves to give us the signs; whether we follow them is another matter.













ENCLAVE

2016
PACE GALLERY | HENI
LONDON, UK

London—Pace London is delighted to announce *Enclave*, an exhibition of new paintings by Jonathan Wateridge. The exhibition will be on view at HENI, 6-10 Lexington Street, from 14 October to 13 November 2016.

In his first exhibition with Pace London and HENI, Wateridge presents his most expressive and personal body of work to date. As a starting point for the series, the artist constructed a large scale set of his childhood garden in Zambia and then worked with actors to develop the imagery for his paintings. Enclosed in an apparent world of poolside suburban sunshine, *Enclave* points to a protected yet fictionalized space that references both the artist's childhood memories of a lost past juxtaposed with the wider issues of the West's role in our post-colonial world.

These new works represent an evolution in Wateridge's painting practice. Initially the works appear as a realist depiction of the scene at hand but the wide variance of mark making and focus on surface, means that, on closer inspection, their verisimilitude begins to break down. As a result, the materiality of the paint comes to the fore. This serves as both a celebration of the painterly and a subtle reminder to the viewer that this is an entirely fabricated environment. The interplay of the figure paintings with the more formal works of the surrounding garden wall – a leitmotif that runs throughout the exhibition – also places an emphasis on the language of painting as much as narrative or social connotations.

The works depict everyday scenes such as sunbathing or lying post-dip on the wet poolside, sharing a drink on the patio or children playing with the family dog. However, through Wateridge's orchestrated control of the environment, their inherent 'mundanity' creates a world that becomes increasingly strange and unfamiliar. This subsequent sense of unease and daylight disquiet also hints at the larger issues at work behind the halcyon façade.

In paintings such as *Swimmer*, or *Pool*, the reclining figures have echoes that range from the Jonestown massacre, to filmmaker John Carpenter. Cinematography is further explored with allusions to Frank Perry's 1968 film *The Swimmer*, which charts the suburban odyssey of a man through a world to which he no longer has access. For *Enclave*, the artist recasts the all American actor Burt Lancaster as a young African man thereby creating a new set of loaded and political associations.



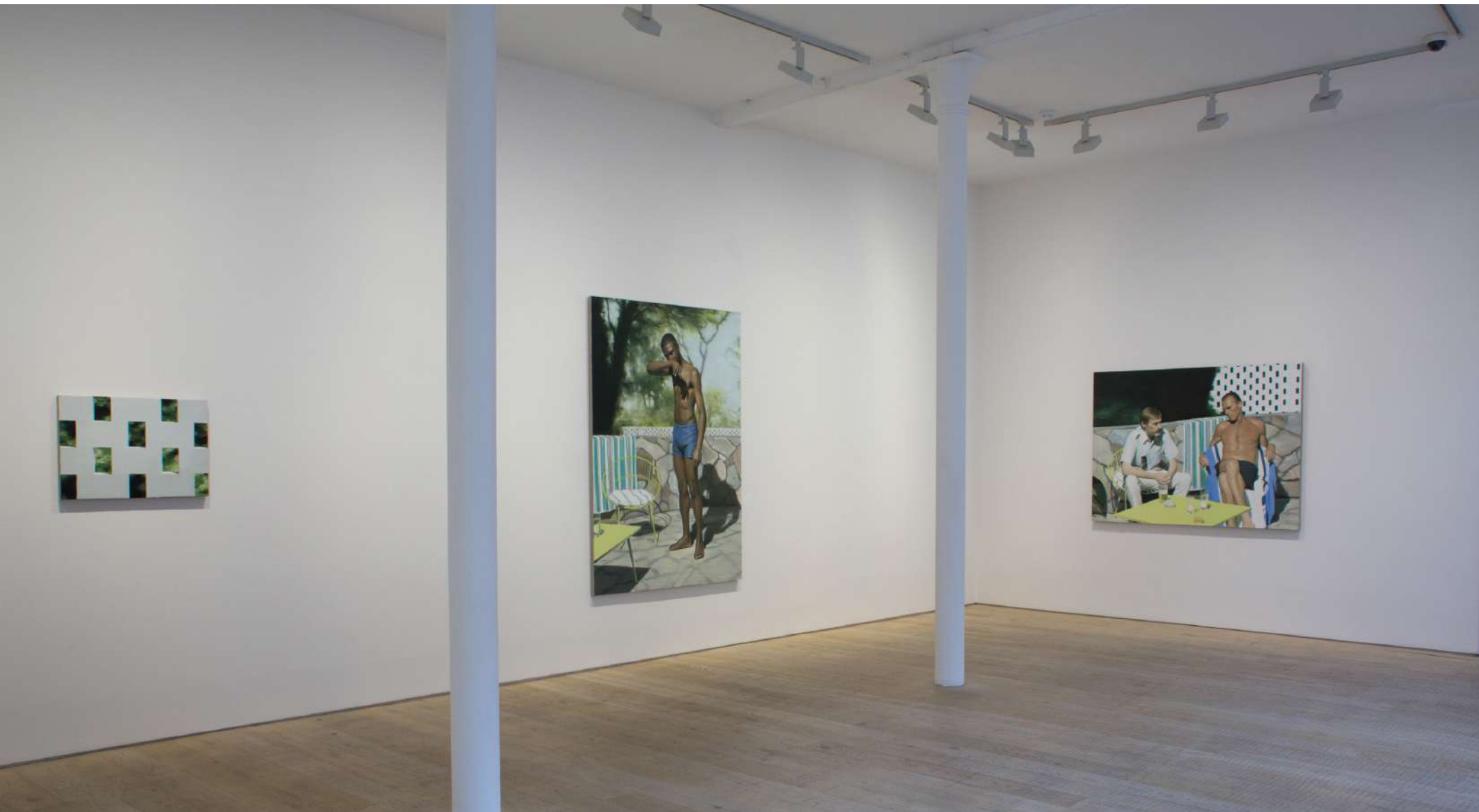
All images courtesy of HENI and the artist.

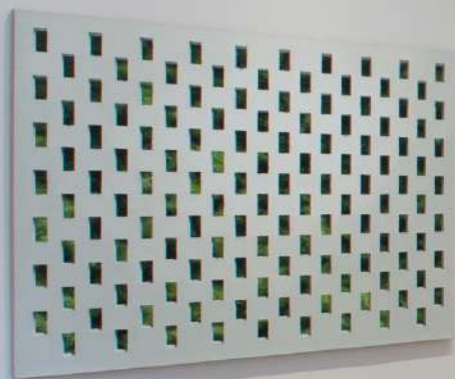
Literary references are embedded within these paintings, in particular the writing of the Argentinian author Adolfo Bioy Cesares and his short story *The Invention of Morel*, where a castaway finds himself trapped on an island uncannily populated by people he can see but who remain unaware of his presence. He moves around them “simultaneously, almost in the same places, without colliding” ¹.

“But where are the ghosts hidden within the enclave? Are its white denizens merely ciphers of a nostalgic past that no longer exists or is the African swimmer the spectre of a colonial history that haunts that nostalgia and whose contemporary form and steady gaze challenges the West’s lingering sense of entitlement?” asks Jonathan Wateridge. In *Enclave*, the artist conjures up an ambiguous world that attempts to unravel what might be termed ‘a politics of memory’, a strategy that is both personal and political in its reading.

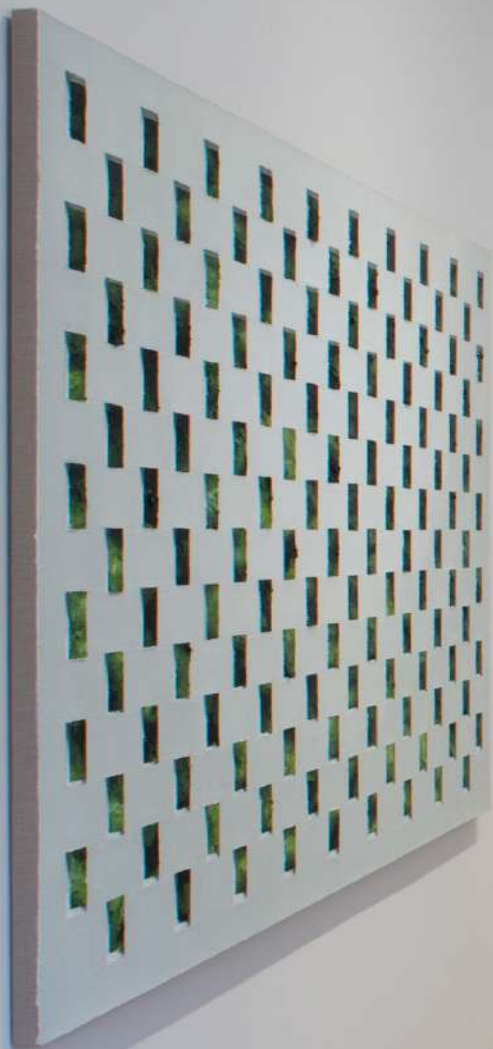
The exhibition is presented in cooperation with Mark Sanders Art Consultancy.

¹ The Invention of Morel.









An abstract painting with a textured, impasto surface. The composition is dominated by a large, bright white and yellow central area, possibly representing a sky or a body of water. This central area is surrounded by dark, swirling green and blue tones, suggesting a landscape or a storm. The bottom of the painting features a prominent, dark blue horizontal band with visible brushstrokes. The overall effect is one of dynamic movement and emotional intensity.

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ELEPHANT

JANUARY 2022

BY VICTORIA WOODCOCK

MOUSSE

MARCH 2021

BY MOUSSE STAFF

IT'S NICE THAT

JANUARY 2018

BY DAPHNE MILNER

FAD MAGAZINE

OCTOBER 2016

BY MARK WESTALL

HUFFPOST

FEBRUARY 2013

BY SUSAN MICHALS

DAZED

JUNE 2010

BY JOHN-PAUL PRYOR

ARTFORUM

FEBRUARY 2007

BY GILDA WILLIAMS

ELEPHANT

JANUARY 2022

Title of Article Why Are Painters So Obsessed with Swimming Pools?

By Victoria Woodcock



Jonathan Wateridge, *Swim*, 2019. Courtesy Nino Mier Gallery and the artist

In a picturesque pool, nestled among lush and unpopulated hillsides, a male figure can be seen swimming underwater, watched by a suit-jacketed spectator. As tense as it is idyllic, the scene is David Hockney's *Portrait of an Artist (Pool with Two Figures)*, a painting that sold for \$90.3m at Christie's in 2018, then a record for a work by a living artist.

When it comes to the subject of the swimming pool in art, Hockney's name still makes the biggest splash. As well as his iconic pop-art *Splash* paintings, works such as *Peter Getting Out of Nick's Pool* (1966) reveal a fascination with the figure in water that encompasses everything from bathing Renaissance nymphs to drowning Pre-Raphaelite maidens. However, contemporary painters also continue to be captivated by themes of swimming and submergence, themes which are now being explored in a broad range of styles.

New York-based artist Katherine Bradford has been incorporating swimmers into her colourful, semi-abstract canvases for the past 10 years. "There are so many visual connections between how water looks and how paint goes on a canvas," explains the 79-year-old artist. "The best and most mysterious effect is the transparency that inevitably happens when something is seen under water."

While Bradford's approach chimes with what Hockney has referred to as an interest in the "formal

problem to represent water”, her work is dreamlike, bordering on the cosmic. Some figures float in watery plains of colour, others appear to fly.

Of her upcoming show *Night Swimming*, which opens at Tomio Koyama Gallery in Tokyo in February, Bradford says: “Each painting takes good advantage of bodies immersed in darkness with just enough moon-like light to give our most daily activities a mystical and otherworldly glow. The beauty of light hitting the surface of water never fails to tempt me to put a swimmer in a pool of deep blue under stars and planets.”

Night swimmers also appear in Jonathan Wateridge’s recent luminous and languid paintings, two of which were included in the Hayward Gallery’s recent exhibition *Mixing It Up: Painting Today*. In these paintings, the pool is used as a “signifier of Western privilege or affluence”. As the artist explains, “I wanted to set up a self-contained and fabricated environment and to have the paintings portray a sense of that artificiality.”

It’s telling that Wateridge’s 2019 exhibition at TJ Boulting gallery was entitled *This Side of Paradise*, after F Scott Fitzgerald’s 1920 debut novel. The paintings summon up hedonistic Californian pool parties, but the atmosphere is sinister and unsettling. In art as in literature, water is rich in symbolism. Its meaning meanders from womb-like security to biblical rebirth, a sense of movement and change to foreboding and danger. “English is loaded with a rich swimming vocabulary that acts as a constant metaphor for how one might go through life, be it diving, floating, drowning, wading or surfing,” Bradford points out.

In the work of Nigerian-born, Philadelphia-based artist Ruby Onyinyechi Amanze, swimmers, divers and pools are part of a symbolic visual language that uses seven recurring motifs “as parts of a poem”, building collage-like compositions on paper. While her diving figures relate to a “continuous fixation with flying”, she says that the swimmers denote her desire “to be inside of water”.

“I want to enter water like a space, a room, a world quite different than land,” Onyinyechi explains. “Land has always felt far too restrictive for me. Too real somehow. But water is different. Air too. I’m a transcontinental immigrant. I flew across waters, so in my world view that in-between space was heightened and became a site of magic, a converter or transmitter.”

For Modupeola Fadugba, time spent in the pool is central to her practice. “Swimming is a meditative exercise for me,” says the self-taught Nigerian artist. “It’s my personal time to reflect, and meditate, to do the simple thing of breathing in and out, and remind myself that I’m alive. I first started using swimming as a metaphor for the artist, navigating the fluid and often turbulent space that is the art world.” Fadugba’s ongoing *Synchronised Swimmers* series shows bodies twisting and turning amid seductive watery surfaces, rippling, overlapping patterns of colourful pastels, burnt paper and gold leaf. Her time spent with the Harlem Honeys and Bears, a synchronised swimming team of senior citizens that offers free swimming lessons to local children, has also resulted in striking poolside portraits.

“Through my swim imagery I have been able to present a counter-narrative of the tragic stories we often hear about Black people and bodies of water,” Fadugba says, referring to research from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the US that states that drowning death rates for Black people are 1.5 times higher than the rates for white people. “With my work, I represent and amplify the triumphant stories, like those of the geriatric swimmers I worked with in Harlem.”

But while the pool can be political, it can also be intensely personal. In the work of LA-based British artist Tahnee Lonsdale, abstracted figures materialise from an undefined body of water, the tangle of semi-submerged limbs surfacing from her own emotional struggles. “I was going through a very painful breakup with a boyfriend while making these works, but the pain was mixed with the joy of finally getting my divorce from my husband, who I split up with three years previously,” she says of pieces such as *Bath My Weary Limbs* (2021) and *Under The Shell* (2021), where some figures seem to be sinking or drowning.

“Duplicitous,” is the adjective Lonsdale applies to water. “Submerged in the bath or the ocean, it

provides gentle healing; you melt into the background. It's a cure for anxiety and sadness. When you cry, tears are swallowed up by the water. Yet, it can also be a cold, dark place. Hostile and angry. Terrifying."

The highly polished, almost too perfect paintings of London-based Will Martyr have a similarly ambivalent attitude to H₂O. They present a world of endless summer, where perfectly tanned and toned bodies lounge by luxurious infinity pools, with a heavy nod to Hockney in the glistening watery surfaces and idyllic villa settings. But Martyr highlights a distinction. "Hockney refers to the two-dimensional depiction of water, shimmering and moving," he says. "While I agree, I also find myself wondering about the undescribed depths of the water, its secrets and its dangers."

Perhaps even the sunniest of pool imagery asks the question "What lies lurking beneath the surface?".

MOUSSE

MARCH 2021

Jonathan Wateridge “Inland Water” at Nino Mier

By Mousse Staff



Nino Mier Gallery is pleased to announce its first solo exhibition with UK-based painter, Jonathan Wateridge. The exhibition, titled *Inland Water*, will be on view in Los Angeles from February 16th to March 20th, 2021.

Inland Water presents a series of Wateridge's recent paintings through which the Zambian-born artist provides a glimpse into private and intimate scenes of poolside affluence visually echoing Wateridge's memories of his suburban upbringing during an era of immense racial and economic inequality in his birth country. While tied to the artist's own history, the imagery escapes the limits of personal narrative and geographic location as Wateridge's cinematic compositions establish a familiar and uncanny atmosphere permeating the façade of comfortable leisure. These painted depictions of exclusionary settings, and the socioeconomic disparity they inevitably suggest, are still equally present decades later in cities all over the world, including Los Angeles, where manmade boundaries such as walls and gates reinforce societal divisions by separating communities of wealth and privilege from members of society who lack the same resources as a result of systemic conditions.

Often confronting the viewer with a direct outward gaze, Wateridge's figures appear disconnected from their serene, seemingly quotidian, spaces as if being confronted by an intrusion into their insular environments, while, in some cases, being further separated from their immediate surroundings by the painterly contours delineating their own form. While each scene contains underpinnings of realism, the tenuous relationship between the subjects and their contrived private spheres points to the highly constructed nature of their existence. In each painting, Wateridge references staged scenes acted

out by hired models on full-scale sets fabricated in his studio. The methodically produced foundations of each painting expand on Wateridge's role as a painter as his practice navigates aspects of both filmmaking and photography while allowing his painted narratives to realign with collectively understood aesthetics manufactured by visual media. Since 2019, Wateridge's paintings demonstrate an increasing separation from reality with a decided shift in style from the artist's earlier more realistic renderings. The scenes presented in *Inland Water* exhibit a coalescence of gestural brushstrokes, knife marks, and vivid colors that allow narratives rooted in memory to take on broader associations untethered from the specificity of their source.

It's Nice That

JANUARY 2018

J “A painting you begin is unlikely to be the one that you’ll finish”: artist Jonathan Wateridge

By Daphne Milner

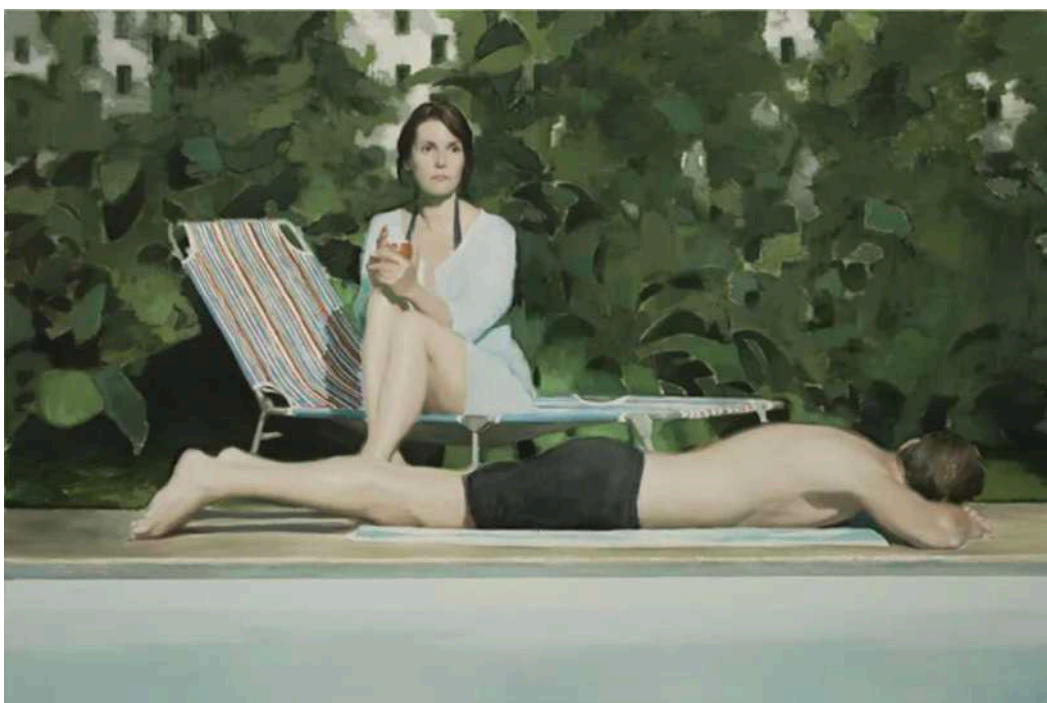


Zambian-born artist Jonathan Wateridge has an extraordinary skill to make his paintings look like ephemeral snapshots. Splitting his time between Norfolk and London, Jonathan works on large canvases from full-scale sets and uses performers and models as subjects for his portrayals. His ethereal and dream-like characters go about their daily lives, lingering around swimming pools or sitting around tables. Jonathan captures them in mundane moments, exuding the carefree stillness of a summer afternoon. His philosophy is that there is nothing permanent about life and that all experiences are fluid and open to interpretation.

Jonathan started painting seriously in the pre-internet age, when he was 15 with little outside resources and influences. By the time he started at The Glasgow School of Art in the early '90s, he thought of painting as a dated art form and spent time experimenting with other media. It was not until 2006 that Jonathan picked up a paintbrush, and hasn't put it down since.

Your work is made up of beautifully crafted fleeting moments. What is it about these instances that inspires you?

I think perhaps it's because these instances are not fixed. Much of what I do is about how things are constructed — at every level, from the way an image is made to the ways our cultures are organised. There is nothing fundamentally permanent about any of these systems and for me a fleeting moment is often an unguarded gap, or reveal, in that sense of construction. Such moments are also, interpretively, more open to the viewer.



How would you describe your painting style?

Looking at my paintings on the internet, I think a lot of people assume that I'm some kind of photorealist which is a bit awkward as I really don't like photorealism! I try to make realist paintings more in the literary or 1860s sense of the word. I spend a lot of time thinking about both content and how to work the surface of the canvas. It's always a bit frustrating when a photo of a three-metre painting is reduced to a small jpeg. In the past, I've used realism as a "default" setting, in order to clearly depict fictitious and constructed environments, without issues of "style" or an "authorial" voice seeming too dominant. Part of that approach stemmed from a conceptual guilt about painting that I've harboured since art school. Now though, I'm slowly finding the confidence to make peace with that baggage and increasingly, my approach is how to best extract the meaning from the image through the paint rather than just by illustrating the scene. I realise I'm not exactly inventing the wheel but that's what excites me — that a painting you begin is unlikely to be the one that you'll finish with.

What does this tell us about your creative process?

There's a documentary feel to some of my work, despite the fact everything I do is a carefully constructed fiction. Essentially, I build a full-scale stage set in my studio, then hire actors and improvise with them, documenting the whole process, so I have a huge reference bank of photographs from which I can select potential sources for paintings. Once I've got an initial selection of images I start by making a series of smaller studies, from which I can later work up the larger final paintings. I'm lucky enough to have a good-sized studio space so I'm able to work on a number of paintings at a time. I constantly move them around to see how they engage with each other, so I can curate a body of work as it evolves.

Given that improvisation is such an important part of your work, is there a message you wish to convey through your paintings?

I don't really like to fix things down for the viewer in terms of a "message". There are subtexts – for example, recreating my family garden in Lusaka (for a show called Enclave) was not just an exercise in nostalgia. I used it as a metaphorical space to raise issues about the West and its entitled relationship to its post-colonial legacy. But if someone just wants to look at the work from a purely aesthetic point of view, that's fine too. I don't want to whack anyone over the head with meaning. Painting tends to work best when it approaches issues tangentially. It's a weird obsolete idiom but because of its history, because its inherent outdatedness is already "built-in", it's actually quite good at taking a broader but sideways look at contemporary issues..

OCTOBER 2016

Jonathan Wateridge

By Mark Westall



Can you tell us about the process you went through to create your paintings.

My process for each project has been pretty similar for a number of years now. After a period of research and reflection on what it is that I'm trying to address with the work, I choose the location in which to set the paintings. That site is then constructed as a large scale set inside my studio. Actors are cast, costumes sourced and a film shoot is organised so that I can stage the performers or improvise with them in order to build up a body of reference imagery, from which the paintings are then developed.

Two main factors contributed to the origins of this current exhibition, Enclave. The first grew out of a previous body of work called Monument, which was exhibited at Wilkinson Gallery in London in late 2014. The show was a response to a few months I spent in Los Angeles and included a number of paintings of what I viewed as 'symbolic surfaces', such as driveways; gates; or a security lit suburban lawn. These paintings alluded to issues of exclusion and access; and also the public and the private.

I subsequently realised that some of my fascination with these parts of LA was because they reminded me so much of areas of the city I grew up in – Lusaka, Zambia. I've never been particularly interested in addressing my own biography but I found myself thinking more and more about this connection. The other factor was the growing tragedy of the migrant crisis over the last couple of years, and more specifically the sense of collective amnesia in the UK as to how these issues had reached this point. I realised that depicting elements of my own past could become a way of tangentially dealing with a wider set of issues concerning the west's relationship to the post-colonial world. The environment seen in the paintings is a set based on my childhood garden in Zambia. It had an open breeze block perimeter wall,

a style which was very common at the time. It soon occurred to me this could be a subtle but resonant motif to run throughout the paintings and that the garden itself could act as a metaphorical site.

The sub-text to this work has perhaps been made more overt by the disturbing tones of the political debate both in the UK and throughout the west in the last year. As I was developing the paintings, I had no idea that the rhetoric of both Brexit and Trump would mean that the notion of 'walls' in relation to access to the western economic 'enclave' would go from being figurative to frighteningly literal!

Is paint the perfect medium for your work?

I believe that you end up becoming the artist you have to be, not necessarily the artist you want to be. I've interrogated my reasons about whether to paint or not for most of my adult life. In someone else's hands the ideas that I'm trying to explore in this exhibition might be better expressed through film or performance or photography. But I can only speak for myself and nothing seems to engage me more than the conceptual, visual and material problems involved in trying to make a successful painting, and particularly within a contemporary art context.

Also, I'm not just interested in image making per se. My work has increasingly dealt with the material aspects of how the painting is constructed; it's surface, paint application, formal organisation and the way that it relates to the history of the medium. And I like that painting resonates across images rather than through them, as film or video often does. I like that painting silently inhabits a wall and doesn't dictate the terms of your attention as a viewer and it can be read very openly in that way.

The cultural influence of new technologies has also been good for painting, in that subjectivity has been reintroduced to image making at a fundamental level. Of course, it was always there but until recently, the alchemical purity of the photograph has given images a degree of 'honesty' most other mediums could never claim. However, the inherent 'constructedness' of new media imagery has changed the conceptual landscape in such a way that it has conferred a degree of renewed legitimacy on painting. Ironically, the weird, odd, made-ness of painting and its very obsolescence is exactly what makes it interesting to be exploring right now.

Should people be more aware of what is going on?

I think paintings work best when they approach things obliquely. I'm interested in the resonance and echo of ideas, as opposed to the confrontational. Too direct an approach closes down an openness of reading in the work and also risks being too didactic or polemical. I just want to do enough to disturb the waters and to make things feel somewhat strange or uncanny and in doing so, raise a few questions.

I also think it's fine if someone wants to view something on a purely aesthetic level. If they want to look further into the work and explore other facets, whether that be narrative or social politics, that's fine too. In addition, supplementary information is always valuable to the reading of any work of art, whether it be a Bruce Nauman or a Botticelli. And I don't have a problem with that. Given that we now experience the world in hugely complex and multifaceted ways, the idea that an object or painting should contain everything you need in order to fully access it, for me, feels a little too singular and absolute.

How long did the exhibition take to put together?

I started the paintings in February of this year but prior to that there's the whole process of conceiving the project and then set building; casting actors; doing the shoot etc. Once that's all completed, I then edit through reference material before making a number of studies. So all in all, from conception, I guess the project has taken around 18 months so far. It also overlapped with work from another project that was showing in Berlin earlier this year, so it's fair to say it's felt like a pretty busy time – not that I would ever complain about that, I like to be working.

What was Glasgow like for you in the 90's?

It depends on whether you're referring to Glasgow as a city, which is a fantastic place or the Glasgow School of Art, which I have a lot of affection for but it's safe to say I didn't have a particularly happy time of it when I was there. I hadn't done a foundation course and went straight into the Glasgow School of Art 2nd year in 1990, knowing absolutely nothing but totally convinced that I wanted to be a painter.

Within six months, I had stopped painting and didn't pick it up again for over 15 years.

At Glasgow, I soon came to believe that painting was a moribund and ineffective way to be making work at the close of the 20th century. In general, the early 90s weren't a great time to be making paintings from a critical and curatorial point of view (indeed figuration, and realism particularly, is still viewed as problematic by many) but this wasn't the case in the painting department in Glasgow at the time and I had to really fight to make conceptually based work in that environment. Things changed for the better soon after I left but I had already grown so disillusioned that I never graduated. The next few years for me were very hard, as I didn't really know which way to go. This was also all pre-internet so, as a 21 year old, your sense of what was creatively out there wasn't as easily accessed as it is now.

I thought film was a possible route but I'm not particularly technically minded and I like being on my own, so I found the more public process of making film very difficult. Not to mention the sheer financial and logistical difficulties of getting projects off the ground.

Memory, is it real?

Philosophically that is probably too big a question to answer here! So instead, I'll assume that you mean that within the context of the exhibition? In that case, memory isn't necessarily false but it's certainly constructed. The idea of 'constructedness', of things being fabricated or somehow false, is a crucial part of my process. The physical reconstruction or reconfiguring of an initial source, via the sets, is a way of applying a sense of remove from the idea of a 'true' origin or referent.

Memory also depends on whether you're referring to personal, biographical experience or collective and cultural memories. We increasingly experience the world through the same relentless barrage of cultural imagery and, as I don't view my experiences as particularly unique, I always assume that if I'm reminded of something whilst planning an image then a potential viewer will also recognise it.

Finally, memory is also related to dreams. And I try to generate an intensity among the paintings that is somewhat dreamlike. In dreams, meaning isn't necessarily fixed or transparent and is open to the symbolic. In a similar manner, I hope it becomes apparent that within Enclave, the 'swimmer' can stand for something much wider than the immediate image of a man sunbathing by a pool.

FEBRUARY 2013

Jonathan Wateridge, British Painter, Talks Los Angeles, Gerhard Richter and Diego Velázquez

By Susan Michals



Realist paintings in Los Angeles are a hard sell these days. More often than not, abstract, street, and nouveau surrealism seem to be the norm along the corridors of La Cienega and Washington Boulevards. So the fact that L&M Gallery decided to go with a realist painter -- let alone an artist with virtually no reach in the American market -- seemed like it could be not only a critical risk, but a financial one as well.

But British painter Jonathan Wateridge -- despite initially walking away from painting for nearly 15 years -- has in a few short years earned quite a following, with names like Saatchi, Olbricht and Taschen as collectors. Then in 2011, Francois Pinault (who originally saw the artist's work at All Visual Arts in a group show in 2009) together with his curator, Caroline Bourgeois, bought a series of Wateridge works (*Another Place*) and showed them at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, a move that made Wateridge an international sensation.

Now Hollywood will get its chance with *Inter + Vista*, his inaugural exhibition at L&M in Los Angeles. With this body of work, the artist divides the two galleries into distinct groupings of contemporary life: In the West Gallery, one will find his more formal and structured works, like *Boy on Wall*, while in the East gallery, his more ethereal, organic works come together with an almost pathologically quiet sensibility. (One painting in particular, *Fog*, is reminiscent of Peter Weir's film, *Picnic at Hanging Rock*). Art collector Kay Saatchi, who has been a fan of Wateridge's work for years, was on hand at the opening night of his

California debut: "This is a museum quality exhibition [at L&M] and not to be missed. Especially if you're worried about the death of painting; Wateridge truly brings paint to life." Here the artist spoke briefly about some of his influences, and the city -- which he's only visiting at the moment -- he'd like to call home... at least for a little while to get away from that abject London frost.

NIGHT VISION

In the past, Wateridge was creating a lot of night scenes, which were particularly prevalent in two series of works from 2009 and 2010, respectively. (See a sample work from 2010 below entitled, Pool Party) Yet for Inter + Vista, he chose specifically not to go that route -- it was an aesthetic edge he wanted to get away from. "Night or darkness creates a sense of insecurity, doubt, of the unknown -- all of which felt useful to those paintings," muses the artist.

"There was also the practicality of it all being set up indoors in my studio with a pretty small budget when it comes to lighting. With not much light available, it was a decision based on necessity as much as anything else." The artist is not altogether comfortable these days with the inherent drama his night scenes created. "A fair few people started making allusions to Gregory Crewdson after those paintings were made. [But] Crewdson's photographs leave me very cold and I'm relieved to have moved away from that vibe with this current show."

INFLUENCE VS. ADMIRATION

For Wateridge, admiration and influence are two separate camps. While he admires the likes of John Currin and Michaël Borremans, they don't necessarily actively appear on his radar while he's in studio. "Richter is one of my favorite painters too, but again, he's such a colossus and has been so thoroughly explored that I'm always wary of straying into his territory," said Wateridge. "For me, Richter's influence is ultimately one of 'possibility'. He has opened up so much space and freed so many subsequent painters by making works that 40 years ago one might have thought were conceptual no go areas. In a very important sense he made it okay to paint again."

In terms of influences, Wateridge always finds himself going back to the artists he feels, did it best. "I'm particularly keen on Manet, (mid career) Degas, Goya, Rembrandt and Titian. Not to mention Piero, Giorgione and so many more. And of course, Velázquez, Velázquez and Velázquez!" Kay Saatchi says she too spots a Velazquezan kinship in his work. "His breathtaking technical skill reminds one of the Spanish painter; his psychological perception of modern life is both alarming and sensitive."

Ultimately, for Wateridge the most important present day influences come from learning what other disciplines might be able to inject into the practice of making a realist painting. "Contemporary photography and cinema have often proved to be much more integral to my thinking than other painters. Jeff Wall is undoubtedly an artist from whom I've learned a great deal; and in cinema among others, Michelangelo Antonioni and David Lynch."

LOS ANGELES: FACT AND FICTION

Aesthetically, Wateridge feels a great affinity with Los Angeles at large. Ironically, he painted the city at one point, even before he had set foot in it. "The elements I've found most fascinating since coming here for the first time are, inevitably perhaps, very different to the fictionalized, generic version of L.A. previously available to me only through films and books. It is a city claimed, indeed perhaps ultimately only borrowed, from a natural wilderness. You get a sense of its construction at every level. The intersection of concrete with vegetation that occurs in many various forms throughout L.A., I find particularly beautiful even though it occurs in quite a brutalist (architecturally speaking) manner at times. On the whole, though, the reality of the city provides a far more prosaic view than its fictionalized version but I much prefer it that way. There's something very poetic about the mundane."

DAZED

FEBRUARY 2010

Jonathan Wateridge

By John-Paul Pryor



Jonathan Wateridge paints what he describes as “elaborate fictions with visible seams”, building huge movie-like sets and employing his friends to pose as characters in the scenes he then commits to canvas. By approaching his craft in this way, the artist creates an arena in which it is possible to play disorientating tricks upon the perceptive reasoning of the viewer. This has perhaps never been more true than it is in *Another Place*, which is currently exhibiting at Tramshed in Shoreditch. The exhibition consists of seven large-scale works depicting various scenes from the set of an entirely fictional movie loosely inspired by the tale of the architect William Mulholland, who built a reservoir that famously collapsed and killed hundreds of Californians (all of the works allude to an unidentified disaster in a tricky, undefined vision of what may or may not be Los Angeles). If this creative method was approached via the medium of photography it would have a considerable degree of impact – approached via the medium of oil painting it takes the viewer to an even more curious place.

Dazed Digital: Cinema has a fetishistic relationship with fictional cataclysm. Is that something you are exploring here?

Jonathan Wateridge: Definitely. Disaster is death metered out in a perfect storm that reduces us to the most insignificant level we can possibly imagine: what makes us fascinated by the whole notion of apocalypse is that it is completely beyond our control. All these paintings are placed within the context of a fictionalised west coast American city that is a very thinly-veiled version of Los Angeles. What interests me most about Los Angeles is that it is literally at the edge or the end of the western world: it's an interesting and very resonant place in that it is so fictionalised by its own cinematic history, but also

by what it represents in terms of America as a whole. There is a book I was reading when researching the project called *The Ecology Of Fear* in which the author postulated that there is this fascinating analogy between the literary destruction of Los Angeles and the threat to the whole idea of American exceptionalism. That's something I found quite interesting

DD: These are set-ups that depict your friends posing as actors in a fictional movie, but the job of any actor is to find the truth of any given situation. In a strange way is there a truth about human experience being explored?

Jonathan Wateridge: I guess because it's all so much about fabrication and fiction the idea of truth has to be in there somewhere, but to me the truth is this very fragile insecure thing, and the one thing I would never do in a painting is to set up or establish any kind of truth. The sense that these figures are in 'someone else's skin' plays up the notion that these identities are ultimately fluid and that the paintings as a whole are more of an exploration of types and systems. In a sense, I am probably wanting to ask questions and almost set up lies, which might in fact wind up telling us about something that has some degree of truth in it. There are, of course, some absolute truths, such as you are born and you die, but as soon as you are interpreting truth through language it becomes contingent and subjective.

*DD: What inspired you to create the haunting cabal of beautiful mannequins in the painting *In-Store Security*?*

Jonathan Wateridge: On a simple level, I guess there's all those films like *Omega Man*, where Charlton Heston is the last surviving guy and he's walking through a department store. I remember seeing that film as a kid and I always loved the uncanniness of him intermingling with the mannequins. There is so much in the work about that uncanny state of being alive or dead and how we read whether something is alive or not in painterly terms, and I thought that was something I could very much explore by having the mannequins in there. I wanted to have them look as oddly lifelike as I possibly could.

DD: There also seems to be something being said about class in these works...

Jonathan Wateridge: Absolutely. The security guard, for instance, is within this environment that is all about money: he guards it and controls it but he has no access to it. I very much saw the three paintings on the right wall of the space as being about affluence, power and the infrastructure of a city, and those on the left as being much more about everyday working-class concerns: on one side of the gallery are scenes from up in the hills, and on the other are those from down in the valley.

DD: In setting up these situations and then painting them in the way that you do, what are you aiming to achieve?

Jonathan Wateridge: I'm interested in creating fabricated worlds in which I hope to explore a diverse range of ideas, but that at a fundamental level always ask questions about the truth value of any given image. If I were to set everything up in the studio and just take a photograph of it you would understand it very quickly, because we all still consider a photograph to depict something 'true'. The irony for me is that as soon as the set-up is cohered into painting you almost believe it even more. Orson Welles once said that with a colour movie you just believe it because it's colour, whereas with a black and white movie you are forced to read it because it's symbolic. Painting and photography have a similar relationship. With painting you are forced to interpret it because you know it has been entirely made. There are, however, truthful elements in the fact that the basis of these works is all a set-up, and in being clear about that I am being very real and true. I enjoy exploiting the different angles by which you can approach painting, and the Brechtian notion that within a theatrical context any 'reality' lies in the performing of the text and not its subject. One of the central facets of these paintings is an exploration of their status as a construct.

ARTFORUM

FEBRUARY 2007

Jonathan Wateridge

By Gilda Williams

Immense shipwrecks and the mysterious remains of plane crashes surrounded by magnificent natural landscapes—stormy oceans; steaming jungles; majestic mountains straight out of “America the Beautiful”—figure in “On a Clear Day You Can See Forever,” Jonathan Wateridge’s debut exhibition. The four big, irresistibly romantic paintings that comprise the show are evocative of both nineteenth-century American landscape painting à la Frederic Church and Hollywood extravaganzas like Frank Capra’s *Lost Horizon* (1937). Wateridge’s sublime paintings turn contemporary, however, by virtue of the unique, complex technique the artist employs: Each is painted in oil on ten large, overlapping sheets of Plexiglas; the resulting object is about a foot thick. Thus the illusion of receding perspective is literally constructed, producing a contrived three-dimensional space recalling the strained effect of 3-D movies from the ’50s. Wateridge’s labor-intensive technique ends up feeling as nostalgic as its subject matter; faced with these grand, shimmering works we become like old-time moviegoers, overwhelmed by low-tech and mechanical special effects. Nevertheless, the almost miraculous seamlessness of the final image floating through layers of transparent material is as awe-inspiring and pleasurable as the overblown images themselves. The artist’s virtuoso technique allows him to indulge in extravagant painterly flourishes—dabs of white paint at the crest of breaking waves in *Seascape with Wrecked Battleship*, 2006, or thin washes of oil paint that produce the silty waters at the bottom of the ocean in *The Wreck of the Constitution*, 2006, and the mist rising from the jungle in *Jungle River Landscape with Plane Wreck*, 2005–2006. Up close, such artful touches look unresolved, but, when viewed from a distance, seem quite the opposite, their almost photographic precision enhancing one’s enjoyment of the painterly spectacle.

These are unapologetically escapist works, and what at first they seem to be escaping from is modernism itself, which, for painters like Wateridge, fellow Brit George Shaw, and many others, has reached the twenty-first century virtually dead on arrival. These decaying ships and smashed airplanes are, from this perspective, nothing other than the very carcasses of modernism, decomposing in some pre-global-warming nature—a potent cosmos still capable of destroying humankind instead of the other way round. In Capra’s *Lost Horizon*, victims of a plane crash find themselves marooned in the mountain paradise of Shangri-la; while some of the lost party insist they must find a way back to civilization, others ask, Why? Why not remain here in Eden? Likewise, Wateridge seems to ask, Why go back to tired old modernism, particularly its manifestation in late Conceptualism, when history is teeming with beautiful pictures? The ragged, crisscrossed lines of blue paint forming the ship’s seaweed-covered rigging on the very top layer of *The Wreck of the Constitution* may, surprisingly, recall Jackson Pollock’s *Blue Poles*, 1952, but they are separated, conceptually, not by fifty years but by a hundred—with Wateridge’s neo-romanticist paintings paradoxically predating Pollock by about a century. Yet Wateridge’s emphatic theatricality suggests that the idealized nineteenth-century landscape is as suspect as modernism for the misguided illusions of the Absolute which they share. Wateridge’s paintings are intelligent fictions on many levels; it is for this reason that they are so absorbing, rather than merely anachronistic.



CURRICULUM VITAE

JONATHAN WATERIDGE

b. 1972 Lusaka, ZM
Lives and works in Norfolk, UK

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2025 *Vanishing Point*, GRIMM, London, UK
- 2023 *Afterparty*, Nino Mier Gallery, New York, NY, US
- 2022 *Aftersun*, Nino Mier Gallery, Brussels, BE
- 2021 *Inland Water*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles, CA, US
- 2020 *This Side of Paradise*, TJ Boulting, London, UK
- 2017 *Swimmer*, Galerie Haas, Zurich, CH
- 2016 *Enclave*, Pace London / HENI, London, UK
Colony, Galerie Michael Haas, Berlin, DE
- 2014 *Monument*, Wilkinson, London, UK
- 2013 *Inter + Vista*, L + M Arts, Los Angeles, CA, US
- 2011 *Mittelland*, All Visual Arts, London, UK
- 2010 *Another Place*, All Visual Arts, London, UK
- 2006 *On a Clear Day You Can See Forever*, David Risley Gallery, London, UK
- 2004 Fordham Gallery, London, UK

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2023 *Beach*, curated by Danny Moynihan, Nino Mier Gallery, New York, NY, US
- 2021 *Mixing It Up: Painting Today*, Hayward Gallery, London, UK
- 2019 *So British! 10 Masterpieces from the Pinault Collection*, Esplanade Fine Art Museum Marcel Duchamp, Rouen, FR
- 2018 *Painting Still Alive*, Centre of Contemporary Art, Torun, PL
- 2017 *Disrupted Imagination*, Central Museum, Szentendre, HU
Proof of Life, Weserburg Museum of Art, Bremen, DE
Disrupted Imagination, House of Arts, Ostrava, CZ
- 2016 *The Good, The Bad & The Ugly*, Charlie Smith, London, UK
- 2015 *Blow Up*, Parafin Gallery, London, UK
- 2012 *Metamorphosis*, All Visual Arts, The Crypt, One Marylebone, London, UK
Beyond Reality - British Painting Today, Galerie Rudolfinum, Prague, CZ
- 2011 *The World Belongs to You*, Pinault Foundation, Palazzo Grassi, Venice, IT

- 2010 *Newspeak, British Art Now*, Saatchi Gallery, Gallery of South Australia, Adelaide, AU
Newspeak, British Art Now, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK
Vanitas; The Transience of Earthly Pleasures, All Visual Arts, London, UK
- 2009 *Newspeak, British Art Now*, Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, RU
The Age of the Marvellous, All Visual Arts, London, UK
- 2007 *A Song Turning Inwards*, Tatjana Peters/One Twenty, Ghent, BZ
- 2006 *The Stone in Art*, Rove, Curated by Danny Moynihan, Rove, London, UK
Black Moon Island, One in the Other, London, UK
- 2005 *Accidental Death*, David Risley Gallery, London, UK
Introspective Men, Madder 139, London, UK
The Future Lasts a Long Time, Le Consortium, Dijon, FR
Future Primitive, One in the Other, London, UK
Faux Realism Part 2, Rockwell, London, UK
- 2004 *The Future Lasts a Long Time*, Tal Esther, Tel Aviv, IL
World B, Flaca Gallery, London, UK

PUBLICATIONS

- 2023 *Uncertain Swimmer*, Anomie (forthcoming)
- 2017 *Swimmer*, Galerie Haas AG
- 2016 *Colony*, Galerie Haas AG
- 2011 *Mittelland*, All Visual Arts
- 2010 *Another Place*, All Visual Arts

COLLECTIONS

Aïshti Foundation, Jal el Dib, LB
 Pinault Foundation, Venice, IT
 Didier Casimiro, Kiev, UA
 Saatchi Collection, London, UK
 Olbricht Collection, Essen, DE
 Simmons & Simmons, London, UK
 Loed Evans, London, UK
 Igal Ahouvi Collection, Tel Aviv, IL
 Anita Zabłudowicz Collection, London, UK
 Benedict Taschen, Germany, DE
 Mollie Dent Brocklehurst, London, UK
 All Visual Arts, London, UK



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