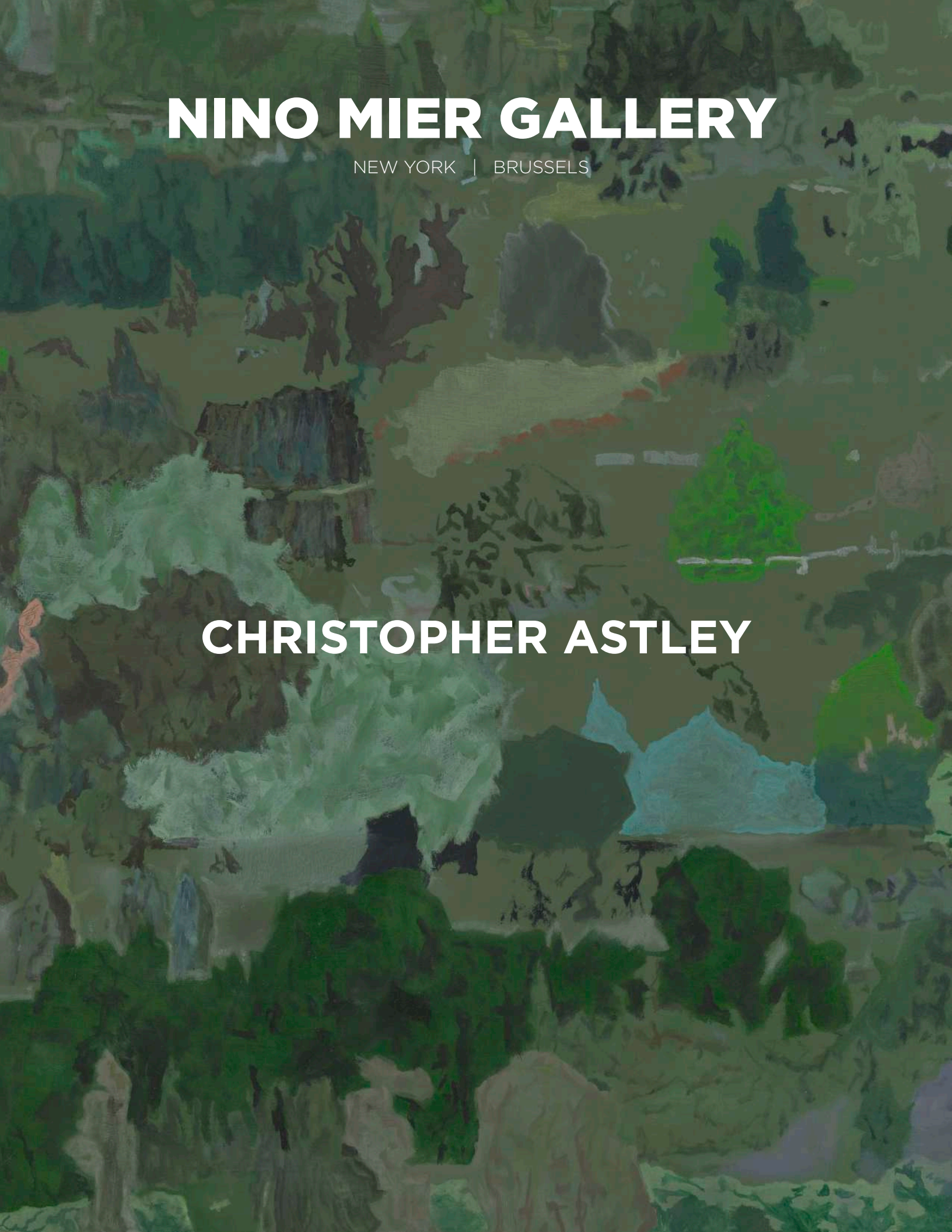
NINO MIER GALLERY

NEW YORK | BRUSSELS



CHRISTOPHER ASTLEY

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BIOGRAPHY

CHRISTOPHER ASTLEY



b.1965, Lansing, MI, US
Lives and works in New York, NY, US

Christopher Astley is a contemporary painter whose work investigates the unstable nature of reality, drawing on themes of time, space, memory, and perception. His ongoing Terrain series (2020–) presents fractured, collaged landscapes that hover between abstraction and representation, reflecting both the natural world and the inner workings of thought, language, and memory. Influenced by encounters with cognitive disruption and memory loss, Astley uses painting as a way to translate the instability of consciousness into visual form.
Earlier works explored the chaos and unreality of war, depicting ghostly battles that questioned how history is perceived and constructed. Referencing Cubism, Chinese landscape painting, and even Winsor McCay's dreamlike cartoons, Astley's practice embraces fragmentation and simultaneity. His paintings serve as meditations on perception, mortality, and human precarity, offering viewers not fixed images of the world but shifting terrains of consciousness and imagination.

Christopher Astley (b. 1965, lives and works in New York, NY, US) studied at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI. He has had solo exhibitions with Martos Gallery, New York, NY, US; Tracy Williams Ltd., New York, NY, US; Leo Koenig, New York, NY, US and Kathleen Cullen Fine Arts, New York, NY, US. Selected group exhibitions wer eheld with Hometown Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, US, Chamber, New York, NY, US; Martos Gallery, New York, NY, US and The Margulies Collection, Miami, FL, US. Astley's work has been featured in Cultured Magazine, Art in America, The New York Times, Interview Magazine, V Magazine, and Gotham Magazine.

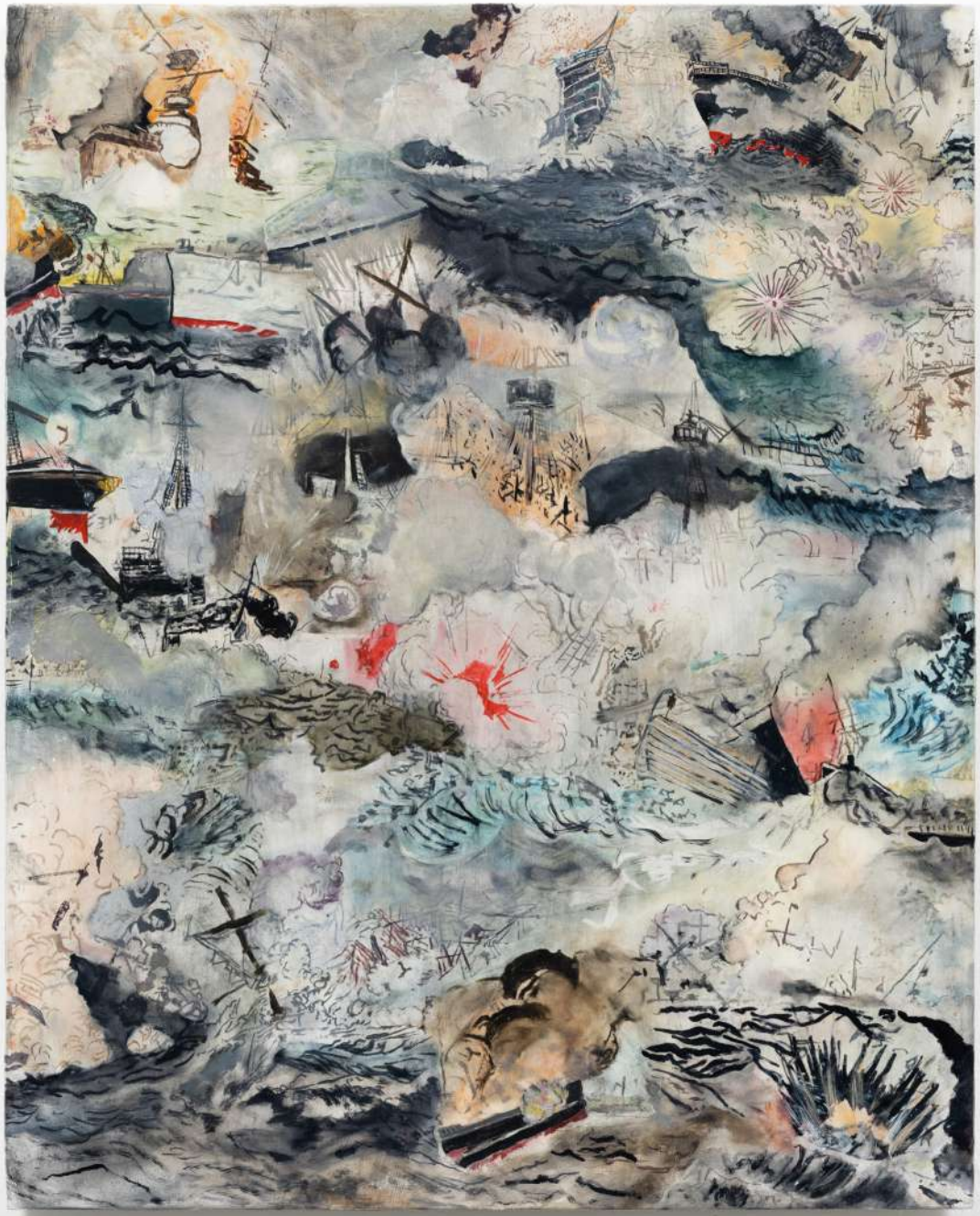


SAMPLE WORKS

*sample selection does not reflect current availability



Terrain Study #7, 2021. Oil paint and gesso on wood panel. 24 x 30 in, 61 x 76.2 cm. (CAS25.011)



Seven Years Below H, 2019
Oil and Gesso on wood panel
16 x 20 in
40.6 x 50.8 cm
(CAS25.010)





Terrain #12, 2024. Oil and Gesso on wood panel. 60 x 84 in, 152.4 x 213.4 cm (CAS25.003)





Seven Years Below G, 2020. Oil and Gesso on wood panel. 32 x 20 in, 81.3 x 50.8 cm (CAS25.007)



Terrain #3, 2022. Oil and Gesso on wood panel. 80 x 96 in, 203.2 x 243.8 cm. (CAS25.006)





Seven Years Below D, 2020.
Oil and Gesso on wood panel
20 in diameter
50.8 cm diameter
(CAS25.008)





Terrain Study #9, 2021. Oil paint and gesso on wood panel. 30 x 40 in, 76.2 x 101.6 cm (CAS25.012)





Soldier 2, 2023
Watercolor and pen on paper
22.0 × 30.0 inches / cm





Terrain Study #10, 2021
Oil paint and gesso on wood panel
16 x 20 in
40.6 x 50.8 cm
(CAS25.013)



Terrain Study #9, 2021. Oil paint and gesso on wood panel. 30 x 40 in, 76.2 x 101.6 cm (CAS25.012)





Seven Years Below VI, 2018
Oil and Gesso on wood panel
20 x 16 in
50.8 x 40.6 cm
(CAS25.005)



SELECTED EXHIBITONS AND PROJECTS

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS AND PROJECTS

TERRAIN
2025
Martos Gallery
NEX YORK, USA.

TERRAIN

FEBRUARY 15 - MARCH 30, 2024
Martos Gallery

New York, USA.

Martos gallery is pleased to present new paintings by Christopher Astley from his Terrain series (2020, ongoing), along with a selection of works from Seven Years Below (2017-2019). The exhibition runs from Feb. 15 to March 16, 2024, with an opening on Thursday, Feb. 15, from 6-8 PM.

In the Terrain paintings (2020, ongoing) Christopher Astley's picture-making can be described by way of a persistent visual language, not

only in relation to a recognizable vocabulary of forms and their collaging, which gives them a sense of heightened spatial dislocation, all within a consistent chromatic range, but in terms of a subject that may be thought of as camouflaged. Appearances, however, are deceiving. What are readily identified as landscapes, albeit fractured and free-floating, metaphorically serve this artist's concerns, both rendered and non-pictorial. As hybrid abstract-representational scenes, the paintings suggest fields and forests, clusters of bushes and trees, hills and pathways, a world alternately natural and artificial. This, of course, is the fiction of painting, connected to our abiding need to make sense of the world around us, and no matter how disordered it initially appears, or especially when it doesn't at first cohere. For many viewers these paintings will register as "landscape," and yet they are not primarily meant to represent nature. Rather, it is the nature of verbal articulation and comprehension, how human thought is expressed and received, how information is retrieved, how speech can be lost and memory becomes unreliable, that chiefly concerns this artist, and through which painting is his preferred mode of translation. The routes we see criss-crossing his paintings might as well be the neural pathways along which ideas and fears travel.

When speaking about these paintings, Astley recalls working in college with individuals who had suffered head injuries and how this affected verbal and visual comprehension; family and friends who have dealt with memory loss and cognitive disintegration. All this underlies how he apprehends the world-as-image and thus reality itself, a set of circumstances always subject to change, often unpredictably. At the same time, he is a painter, someone who finds ways to understand who he is through the invention of images. The collage aspect of these paintings, what we might call their visual stutter, clearly reflects the fragmentation of modern life and the impact of technology. When considering them we may well wonder, Has this terrain been surveilled by drones? Does the imaging, alternately blurred and high definition, overlay Impressionism and computer rendering, calling to mind video games, satellite imagery and observation en plein air? That the artist produces these works in a windowless studio also underscores a distance on those painters who aimed to capture the ephemerality of nature as it is. Astley returns over and again to life as it feels, and not without trepidation, to mental precarity, human mortality, and uncertain times. Another green world? Haven't we been here before, though not quite in the same way? The already buoyant Chinese landscapes of the 10th century come to mind, further unmoored. As well as Cubism, though flattened, its facets and multiple perspectives superimposed as a compressed topography. Perhaps surprisingly, or not, Astley is a fan of the cartoonist and pioneering animator Winsor McCay, famous for the character Little Nemo. In one story, he has to make his way through a dense forest of towering mushrooms, inadvertently causing them to collapse on top of him. Startled awake, he realizes that he had only been dreaming. (Astley might interpret this as a flash-back to a psychedelic experience.) In a McCay cartoon that pictures a young boy about to sneeze, the very frame around the illustration's final panel is shattered by his convulsion. For Astley, this would seem to confirm that accepted reality is conditional, that art has the power to expand and transform consciousness: drugs without having to take them.

The paintings that comprise the series Seven Years Below (2017-2019),
represent battles in a way that captures the chaos, simultaneity, and utter irreality of war. Astley has referred to the relationship between opposing forces as "hallucinatory, calling into question the nature of the

perception of time and space, and, by extension, our conception of history." These scenes, particularly those featuring masted warships and cannon, appear to be set in conflicts from the distant past. They explode in kinetic bursts of flame and destruction. The soldiers are hazy, faint figures, appropriately enough, apparitions, ghosts in these troubled times haunting us still. These are history paintings for Astley, "where the subject is not a particular event or cast of historical figures but rather the mechanism of history itself."

—Bob Nickas





SELECTED PRESS

SELECTED PRESS

THE BROOKLYN RAIL
TERRAIN

WALLPAPER
NEW YORK ARTIST CHRISTOPHER ASTLEY SHOWCASES AN ALTERNATIVE NATURAL WORLD

The Brooklyn Rail

TERRAIN



Christopher Astley's Terrain at Martos Gallery features ten sprawling canvases from his series of the same name, each depicting verdant landscapes and meadows. Each element is comprised of small, quadrilateral, pixel-like squares and rectangles that coalesce into flattened green canopies, chestnut-ochre boles, and ribbons of chartreuse grass planes. At first glance, the series readily echoes the "post-internet" visual lexicon sported by digital painters like Alexei Shulgin, Bunny Rogers, Anne-Mie Van Kerckhoven, and Petra Cortright. But where Van Kerckhoven and Cortright use the filter, palette, and vector-layering tools of programs like PhotoShop and After Effects to transform widely circulated online imagery into nebulous abstractions that are printed onto canvas, Astley hews true to oil and gesso on wood panel. Furthermore, Astley's landscapes do not have their roots in digitally-circulated images. Though Astley's series, executed from 2022 to 2024, depicts lime-green pine trees, verdurous plains, and jade tufts of grass in progressively blockier, pixelated terms, it does not entirely renounce the painterly. Indeed, the occasional errant dispensation of a right-angle corner or uneven edge betrays the brush's presence. These are not "digital paintings" but paintings that trade in digital seeing and remembering.

Throughout the "Terrains," Astley employs diagonal lines—sawtooth planes, painted in alabaster white rectangles—that bisect the picture plane. In earlier works from the series, such as Terrain #2 (2023) and Terrain #3 (2022), these channels could readily be interpreted as tumbled-pebble paths or snow-topped trails. The arborous coagulations and tree branches that top these serried pixel-lines cast shadows over them, suggesting that the latter are continuous with and a part of the same reality as former. Beginning with Terrain #6 (2023), however, Astley's landscapes are increasingly freed from veristic grips. The serrated white channels become an alien force—an outside afflatus "from without." These lineaments grow into block-like concatenations of sharp, individuated rectangles. Where shrubs float along them, they are sans shadow. This progression is coeval to Astley's increasingly

contracted use of perspective in later works like Terrain Study #7 (2023) and Terrain Study #11 (2024), which enjoy an intensification in pixel-pocked structuration all around. The trees, bushes, and grass all become progressively pixelated. The digital vernacular eventually rises to its nadir and, naturalistic hangovers abdicated, Astley allows for his white lines to unspool their full, foreign force with his "white paintings," Terrain #10 and Terrain #12 (both 2024). Much of the verdure is now captured by white, the occasional fir effluvium strip or verdant rod reminding us of the green wilderness's presence. The Outside's insistence has taken over the canvas as negative space, the once lush landscape now shot through with a cascade of white, pixel-sized gaps and gapes.

Terrain #10 and Terrain #12 are the two most recent works from the series, prompted by an episode from the artist's recent past. Following a pulmonary embolism, Astley's physician informed him of the possibility of early-onset dementia. This indicates a striking continuity between the thematic content in Astley's 2020 "Seven Years Below" series and that of the "Terrains." "Seven Years Below" was an ukiyo-e inspired ambit where the artist overlaid collated imagery of historically indeterminate soldiers on sabulous mountains. As evinced by Astley's recent interview with James Scarborough, "Seven Years Below" was concerned with "the chaos and irreality of war"—that is, particularly for those of us who have not experienced it first-hand, how our episodic memory might represent a broad concept like "war," abstracting and equivocating myriad images of disparate battles and soldiers. In both "Seven Years Below" and "Terrains," we are privy to the churnings of episodic memory as it conceptualizes representational items like "war" and "landscape." Both series function as meta-studies on remembering that forego veridicality in favor of mental representing-cum-imagining. Throughout Astley's "Terrains" we traipse through increasingly memory-pocked imagined reflections on an indeterminate landscape. We find Astley painting both how he may eventually come to remember such a landscape, until there are only slivers of memory left, and how he imagines this forgetting will optically appear. This is done effectively. Foregoing overly saccharine rues and sentimentality, Astley perspicaciously imagines the narrative process of forgetting.

The question then rises to the fore of why, exactly, does Astley adhere to the device of pixel-painting and what does his broader engagement with digital vernacular tell us about the meaning of the series? After all, Astley could have chronicled this imagined process of forgetting with veristic landscapes overtaken by pooling blank craters. Astley's aforementioned interview is revealing, as he remarks, "I think that drones and satellite imagery allow us a whole new way of seeing and collecting information about the world." Much the same can be said for computer screens. Yet Astley's "Terrains" demonstrate that these digital apparatuses do not so much "allow us" new ways of seeing as force us to see qua digitality. Memory and imagining are no exception. The images that Astley relays as forfeited by episodic memory may, indeed, be landscape images derived from a search engine, but this is too simplistic for what Astley's paintings demonstrate. They instead decry an interest in our contemporary modes of seeing and remembering. In its rapprochement with digital technologies and media, perceptual experience has been sublated such that even memorial retention and recollection of worldly wilderness is suffused with the being of the digital. Whatever their original source—whether it be a primeval forest or a photograph from Google Images—imaginings and retrieved memories, alike, are set into the pixel-jagged contours of a digital relief.

Wallpaper

NEW YORK ARTIST CHRISTOPHER ASTLEY SHOWCASES AN ALTERNATIVE NATURAL WORLD



At Martos Gallery in New York, Christopher Astley's paintings evoke an alternative natural world and the chaos of warfare (until 16 March 2024)

Martos Gallery offers a slice of serenity in the heart of New York with its latest exhibition, Christopher Astley's 'Terrain'. Paintings from the artist's eponymous new series, accompanied by a selection of previous works, offer a moment to ponder and admire the visual language that hints at countryside landscapes and clusters of forestry. The Terrain series (2020, ongoing) utilises oil paints to create a depth that imitates a collage-like landscape. By using varying hues of green, Astley creates a camouflaged world in which the subject matter isn't obvious. The bird's-eye view suggests, at first, identifiable trees, paths, fields and hills, yet the angular shapes give the series an abstract feel. Astley has presented an alternative natural world that juxtaposes neatly with Martos Gallery's urban location. The inspiration for these paintings came from the experiences Astley had working in college with individuals who had suffered head injuries, which affected verbal and visual comprehension. This impacted how the artist wanted to present the natural world, which can be seen in different ways, dependent on the viewer. The collage technique within the paintings adds a rendered texture, allowing the viewer to wonder if the imagery is computer-generated. The series' imaginative aspects are further emphasised by the fact that Astley produced the works in a windowless studio, with no physical green space to reference. Astley says, 'I am very interested in the underlying nature of reality and the way that people perceive the world. To me, collage is very similar to the way that people actually see things. We take in fragments of information through our eyes and senses, and our brain fills in the gaps to make the world make sense and appear seamless. 'The basic themes in the Terrain paintings have to do with nature and the way we use our minds to collage together the image of a forest or a landscape using fragments of what we see, knowledge that we've acquired, and our imagination. In these paintings, pieces of tree and bush-like shapes are stitched together, with painted hash marks

that fill in gaps where there is little information. ‘In the white paintings in the series, I was particularly interested in when people have trouble mentally putting things together or remembering. Like when people have dementia, a stroke or are simply becoming old.’ The exhibition also showcases Astley’s previous work Seven Years Below (2017-2019), which is a stark contrast to the green landscapes. The series, featuring abstract earth tones, with gentle hints of red and blue, represents battles that emulate the chaos, brutality and irrationality of war. Scenes with swirling blues and browns mirror past conflicts at sea, amid cannons and ships’ masts. These are history paintings for Astley, ‘where the subject is not a particular event or cast of historical figures but rather the mechanism of history itself’.





CURRICULUM VITAE

CHRISTOPHER ASTLEY

Born 1965 in East Lansing, MN, US
Lives and works in New York, NY

EDUCATION

1988 University of Michigan, MN, US

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2024 Terrain, Martos Gallert, New York, NY, US

2016 Conglomerations: backfill, slag & scree, Tracy Williams, Ltd., New York, NY, US 2012 Mayhap, Leo Koenig, Inc., New York, NY, US

2010 Hunt and Chase, curated by Beth Rudin DeWoody, East Hampton, NY, US Geronimo, BravinLee Pro grams, New York, NY, US
Kryptonite, Kathleen Cullen Fine Arts, New York, NY, US

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2016 Over the Hills, Hometown Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, US
People, Places, Things, Tracy Williams, Ltd., New York, NY, US

2015 Collection #2 'Human | Nature", curated by Andrew Zuckerman, Chamber, New York, NY, US

2013 LAT. 41° 7' N., LONG. 72° 19', curated by Bob Nickas, Martos Gallery, New York, NY, US

2012 Lotus House, Art Live, Miami, FL, US

2011 Dark Christmas, Leo Koenig, Inc., New York, NY, US
Of Memory and Time, Hendershot Gallery, New York, NY, US
Obstacle, curated by Steven Ladd and William Ladd, Brooklyn, NY, US
The 2010 – 2011 Exhibition at the Warehouse, The Margulies Collection, Miami, FL, US

2010 Groan Hall, AFP Lab, Art Production Fund, New York, NY, US
Plank Road, Salomon Contemporary, East Hampton, NY, US
Hunt and Chase, curated by Beth Rudin DeWoody, East Hampton, NY, US

2008 In the Viewing Room, curated by Paul Bloodgood, Frederieke Taylor Gallery, New York, NY, US
Ho Hum All Ye Faithful, BravinLee Programs, New York, NY, US

2007 Things From Your Life: An Exhibition in 3 Homes, curated by Kelly Adams and Paul Bloodgood, New York, NY, US
Basement Sculptures, curated by David Bar Katz, 38 Watts Street, New York, NY, US

2004 UnNaturally, curated by Mary-Kay Lombino, Lowe Art Museum, Miami, FL, US
Copia – The American Centre For Wine, Foods and the Arts, Napa, Ca, US
Fisher Gallery, Univerisity of Southern California, Los Angeles, CA, US
Random Generation, Michael Steinberg Gallery, New York, NY, US

2003 H&R Block Artspace, KansasCity Art Institute, Kansas City, MI, US
Contemporary Art Museum, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, US

2001 Future Perfect, Silverstein Gallery, New York, NY, US

LITERATURE

2016 Haber, John. “Digging Deeper,” Haber’s Art Reviews, May 2016

2013 Zwick, Tracy. “Coordinates: Martos Gallery’s Summer Group Show on the North Fork,” Art in America, Summer
Rosenberg, Karen. “Wry to Whimsical, a Summer Eden for Improvisers,” The New York Times, July 18

2012 Chayka, Kyle. “One-Line Reviews: Our Staff’s Pithy Takes on Tomas Saraceno, Claes Oldenburg & Coosje Van Bruggen, And More,” Blouin ArtInfo, June 22

2010 Mattera, Joanne. “Fair Enough: Seven,” Joanne Mattera Art Blog, December 14
Berry, Nicole. “Art Basel Miami Beach and More,” Accessible Art Blog, December 7
Cyk, Jamie. “Chris Astley’s Groan Hall,” V Magazine, September 22
Goergen, Stacey. “Displays of Affection: For Philanthropist Beth Rudin DeWoody, Collecting and Dis playing Art is a Labor of Love,” Gotham Magazine, November
Chou, Kimberly. “What’s in the Bag: The Sculpture of Christopher Astley,” Interview Magazine, June 10

2003 Loimbino, Mary K., UnNaturally, catalogue, Independent Curators International, New York, NY, US

COLLECTIONS

The Margulies Collection, US



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