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HYPERALLERGIC

Art Review

José María Velasco Lovingly Captured a Changing Mexico

He celebrated the physical entity of Mexico in its exactness, rather than appealing to ingrained nationalistic European sensibilities of history painting.

Olivia McEwan August 6, 2025

José María Velasco, "The Valley of Mexico from the Hill of Santa Isabel" (1875), oil on canvas (all photos Olivia McEwan/*Hyperallergic*)

LONDON — The National Gallery hasn't loudly trumpeted its decade-long strategy to introduce British audiences to art beyond Europe. Instead, it diligently rectifies this art-historical narrow-mindedness by covering major overlooked bases, such as with recent shows on American painter Winslow Homer or Australian Impressionists. Now, *José María Velasco: A View of Mexico* is the first monographic exhibition of this major 19th-century Mexican artist in the United Kingdom, and, staggeringly, the National's first dedicated to a Latin-American artist. In this sense, curators Dexter Dalwood and Daniel Sobrino Ralston don't need the additional justification of it being the 200th anniversary of the establishment of British-Mexican diplomatic relations.

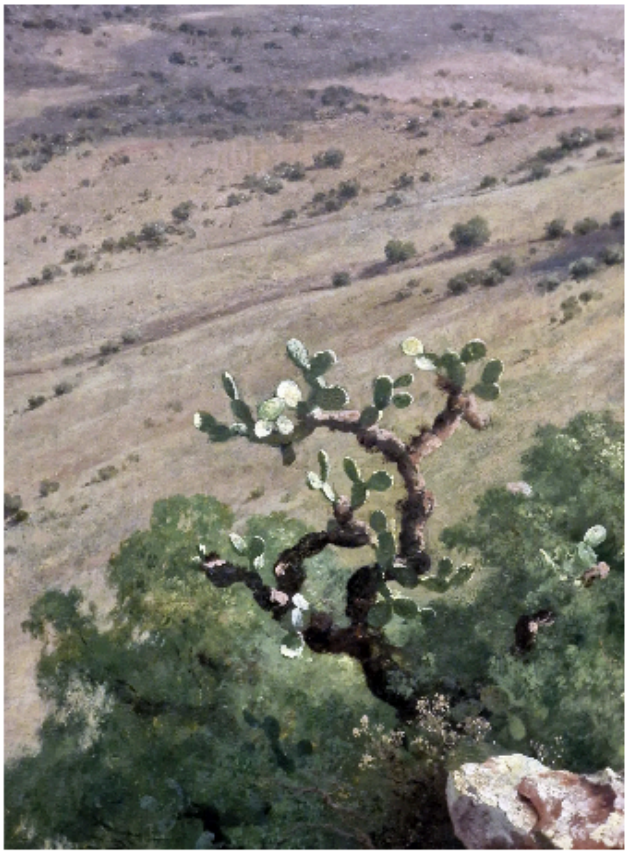
Velasco is not an overtly nationalistic painter in an iconographic sense. Unlike European counterparts who would typically use landscape as a setting for dramatic narrative scenes (a concurrent National show on Millet, for example, which focuses on peasant characters framed by landscape), the topography, flora, and fauna are the subject; the high-altitude volcanic land surrounding Mexico City is the character. Velasco was a founding member of the Sociedad Mexicana de Historia Natural, and his inclination to meticulously record details of natural elements — as opposed to fictionally embellish them — makes his work documentary rather than narrative. As a result, we can track the gradual industrialization and modernization of Mexico in his work via the dotted appearances of factory buildings or expanding cities in the topographical distance.

The paintings are quietly grand in their monumental scale, rather than visually bombastic. Where narrative landscapes typically construct depth via artificial layers like scenery on a stage, Velasco's vistas — clearly recorded in situ — employ staggering technical draftsmanship to induce a vertiginous sense of a precipitous drop: His epic "The Valley of Mexico (View of the Valley of Mexico from the Hill of Santa Isabel)" (1877) seems to sweep down away from our feet. Cloud shadows across distant mountains are a naturalistic detail few narrative painters would think to include. As in botanical work, oil glazes are rare, lending the colors an opacity and hardness that captures the dryness of the Mexican scrubland.

Later works, following an accident that limited Velasco's mobility in 1901, are more lyrical; still, there remains that quietness and subtlety, as well as that persistent monumentality. Most striking is "The Great Comet of 1882" (1910), which records from memory a phenomenon he witnessed decades prior, a singular white whoosh bisecting a softly graded but otherwise totally plain sky. That it portends the Mexican Revolution of the same year, as the caption suggests, however, may be wishful interpretation, a single clanger amongst otherwise sensible exhibition text.

Critics of this show who label the painter as "proudly dull ... unromantic [and] objective" or "boring" miss the point. Velasco should be viewed as a technical powerhouse celebrating the physical entity of Mexico itself, importantly recording its history academically, rather than appealing to ingrained nationalistic European sensibilities of history painting. More shows like this, please.

José María Velasco, "The Goatherd of San Angel" (1863), oil on canvas



Left: José María Velasco, “Rocks” (1894), oil on canvas; right: detail of José María Velasco, “The Valley of Mexico from the Hill of Santa Isabel” (1875), oil on canvas

Installation view of *José María Velasco: A View of Mexico*

José María Velasco: A View of Mexico *continues at the National Gallery (Trafalgar Square) through August 17. The exhibition will travel to the Minneapolis Institute of Art from September 27, 2025, to January 4, 2026. The exhibition was curated by Dexter Dalwood and Daniel Sobrino Ralston.*

Apollo
21 March 2025

APOLLO
THE INTERNATIONAL ART MAGAZINE

ART DIARY

José María Velasco: A View of Mexico

Apollo

21 MARCH 2025

The Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon (1878; detail), José María Velasco. Private collection. Photo: © Oliver Santana

The landscapes of the 19th-century painter José María Velasco look serene at first – a vast mountain vista, a monumental giant cactus, rugged hillscapes with cloudless skies. But the artist, who primarily painted the Valley of Mexico, the area that surrounds Mexico City, was well aware of the march of industry in the capital and frequently included textile mills, factories and concrete buildings in his paintings. The National Gallery is hosting the first major exhibition of Velasco's work to take place outside his home country in

five decades (29 March–17 August). The show highlights the beauty of his composistions as well as drawing attention to the way in which Velasco, a polymath with a keen interest in botany and geology, approached painting as an almost scientific process. Since there are no Velasco works in UK public collections, all of the paintings shown here have been loaned specially for the exhibition, but several contemporaneous works from the museum's collection that have links to Mexico – Manet's *Execution of Maximilian* (*c*. 1867–68), for example – will also be on show.

The Valley of Mexico from the Hill of Santa Isabel (1877), José María Velasco. Museo Nacional de Arte, INBAL, Mexico City. Photo: © Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura

Cardón, State of Oaxaca (1887), José María Velasco. Museo Nacional de Arte, INBAL, Mexico City. Photo: © Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura, 2024

The Goatherd of San Ángel (1863), José María Velasco. Museo Nacional de Arte, INBAL, Mexico City. Photo: © Instituto Nacional de Bellas Artes y Literatura, 2024

The Pyramids of the Sun and the Moon (1878), José María Velasco. Private collection. Photo: © Oliver Santana

The Guardian
17 March 2025

The Guardian US

Borderline genius: how José María Velasco's landscapes redefined perceptions of Mexico

Nicholas Wroe

Mon 17 Mar 2025 04.00 EDT

No way, José ... The Valley of Mexico from the Hill of Santa Isabel. Photograph: Museo Nacional de Arte, INBAL, Mexico City

An exhibition of works by the 19th-century artist shows his role in creating a sense of Mexican identity – revealing that he was more polymath than painter

Due to the longstanding political and territorial anxieties that emanate from the border between Mexico and the US, both countries often choose to define themselves in terms of their relationship to the other. We mostly get to see the American side of this ever evolving story, but a new exhibition at the National Gallery in London gives a rare opportunity to examine a Mexican perspective on its own terrain, and by implication on that of its neighbour.

Before Diego Rivera and Frida Kahlo developed and exported their 20th-century Mexican aesthetics, there was José María Velasco (1840-1912), who produced a body of landscape paintings that was widely regarded as integral to the creation of a Mexican identity and nationhood.

"Velasco is not as well known abroad as Rivera and Kahlo," explains co-curator Daniel Sobrino Ralston, who along with the Mexico-based artist and curator Dexter Dalwood has put the show together. "But in Mexico his public status is analogous to, say, Constable or Turner's in the UK. And he wasn't just a painter. Velasco was a genuine polymath who engaged with contemporary thinking in geology and botany and zoology and these intense scientific studies of the local topography also come out in the paintings."

> *Landscape painting was a way to understand other nations. What did a country look like?*

Velasco was born into a febrile world in which Mexico had recently ceded the vast lands it had controlled in what is now the south-west of the US, and was facing incursions from the north. Orphaned in childhood, he was brought up in poverty in Mexico City but eventually made it to the country's first school of art, where he came under the influence of an Italian painter and teacher. "While his early work fits into the European Romantic tradition," explains Ralston, "what is really impressive is how this changes. The conventional prerequisites for landscape painting are soon abandoned to make work that is much more stark and abstract."

Into these spacious ancient landscapes, specific and accurate in their geology, Velasco not only integrated signs of old and new human interventions - a goatherd by a factory, railways linking settlements - but also symbols of Mexican culture and history. Most notably in the foreground of his study of The Valley of Mexico from the Hill of Santa Isabel there is a small depiction of a nopal (prickly pear) cactus and an eagle with prey in its mouth, the emblem at the centre of the Mexican national flag and a link to the ancient myth that the nation's capital city should be founded where such a scene takes place.

It was during the autocratic military regime of Porfirio Díaz from 1876 that Velasco's work was adopted by the state. Although there is little evidence of his own politics, his paintings were sent overseas - Velasco himself only left Mexico twice - and were acquired by the government as gifts for both an American president and a pope. "The timing was perfect," says Ralston. "Landscape painting was taking over from history painting as a way to understand other nations. What did a country look like? What are its resources? His work became the great example of what Mexico was."

After his death, his work fell out of fashion and it was with the unlikely help of Rivera, an admirer who had first encountered Velasco when a precocious 12-year-old art student, that he was restored to the centre of Mexican cultural history. The National Gallery exhibition is its first full show dedicated to a Latin American artist and features 30 paintings and drawings that illustrate Velasco's artistic and scientific endeavours.

Ralston says examination of 19th-century American landscape painters is also instructive. "Velasco is compared to them but they often show us a sort of untouched wilderness there for the taking with no history on it, which of course was not true. Velasco, through his plants and symbols and so much else, gives us the sense of a long and expansive history reaching back to ancient civilisations, perhaps in contrast to the relatively newly created republic to its north."

Hasta la vista: five images from the exhibition

Cardón, State of Oaxaca, 1887. Photograph: Francisco Kochen/Museo Nacional de Arte, INBAL, Mexico City

Cardón, State of Oaxaca, 1887
This wondrous giant cactus is part of Velasco's lifelong engagement with the plant life of Mexico, but it is also something grander. The tiny human figure not only allows the viewer to get a sense of scale, but also to contemplate the relationship between man and nature.

The Valley of Mexico from the Hill of Santa Isabel, 1877 (main image)
Considered Velasco's greatest artistic achievement, this huge painting subtly brings together different historical eras in an almost imperceptibly subtle way. It pays equal homage to both the location's natural and human histories.

The Goatherd of San Ángel, 1863. Photograph: Museo Nacional de Arte, INBAL, Mexico City

The Goatherd of San Ángel, 1863
A scene from the south-west of the expanding Mexico City where the river has been dammed to supply a textile factory. The contrast between the new and old is amplified by the presence of agave plants, which have been used for making alcohol for thousands of years up to the tequila production of the present day.

The Textile Mill of La Carolina, Puebla, 1887. Photograph: José María Velasco/National Museum of the Czech Republic, Prague

The Textile Mill of La Carolina, Puebla, 1887
This painting, again employing botanical and industrial details to enrich deceivingly simple grand natural vistas, was commissioned by a bohemian pharmacist, František Kaska. He was a confidant of emperor Maximilian I, providing a direct link to Manet, and acted as an unofficial emissary between the Austro-Hungarian empire and Mexico after the emperor's execution.

The Great Comet of 1882, 1910. Photograph: José María Velasco/Colección Museo de Arte del Estado de Veracruz

The Great Comet of 1882

Velasco's last great work was painted in 1910, which saw the outbreak of revolution in Mexico as well as a sighting of Halley's comet. He returned to his own sighting of the 1882 comet, to evoke moments freighted in symbolism in Mexico since Montezuma's reported comet sighting in 1517 just before the arrival of the Spanish in 1519, tying together long histories and moments of great change.

José María Velasco: A View of Mexico is at the National Gallery, 29 March to 17 August.

LISSON GALLERY

Prospect Magazine
19 November 2024

Prospect

What even is English painting, anyway?

The artist Dexter Dalwood set out to find an answer—but, in the end, produced something much more personal than it is national

By David McAllister November 19, 2024

"English Painting" (2023) by Dexter Dalwood. Image: Dexter Dalwood, courtesy Lisson Gallery

One of the most insightful things the painter Dexter Dalwood ever learnt about English painting came from an American. He recalls to me a time he was curating a show of works with the artist Alex Katz at Tate St Ives: "There was a painting by Thomas Lawrence, it was like a 19th-century British painting. And Katz said the thing about Lawrence is that he has this inherent thing that English painting has: elegance. I've never heard an American artist ever speak about Englishness or English painting. And I thought that was really kind of cool."

Now himself at a step removed from "the culture"—having lived in Mexico City since 2020—Dalwood has found himself spending a lot of time thinking once again about what Englishness means, at least when it comes to painting. "You start thinking about the idea of, you know, what *is* it? What *is* that thing?" he says. "What is the idea, if you had to define something by what was English about it?"

The outcome of this line of questioning is a new series of paintings currently on display at London's Lisson Gallery. At first glance, it might seem as though Dalwood has dropped the scenes of liminal non-places for which he made a name for himself —the insides of taxis and airplanes, the carefully constructed interiors representing specific, often niche, moments in history—in favour of something more tangible. We find a nod to David Bowie, whom Dalwood sees as the textbook English flaneur; we see allusions to the occultist Aleister Crowley; to the Pre-Raphaelites; to key dates and years such as 1066 and Bloody Sunday. Very soon, however, you realise that the non-place and the nation state are not quite as diametrically opposed as might be assumed. National identity, too, is something slippery and ill-defined; it too is a carefully constructed fiction.

Dalwood is keen to stress that he is not attempting to make any definitive comment on what "Englishness" is with these works, at least not insofar as such a definition might create a checklist by which other things—or other people—can be said to pass or fail. As a consequence, he has stayed, mostly, on more subjective terrain: the specific places he remembers from his youth, the music he listened to, the kind of English painting he himself admires. "The biggest influence on my painting hasn't just been English painting or other paintings, it's been the music I've grown up with," he says. "It's what's also influenced what I feel is the culture."

Standing before *Punk is Dead*, a large canvas of the famous London punk venue Roxy Club seen obliquely from a dark puddle—mirrored and upside down, its red neon sign giving out an eerie hue—Dalwood tells me of the strangeness of watching this crucial period he lived through become "solidified" into something completely unrelatable. "What is now becoming the history of punk isn't quite what I recognise," he says. "I did always think, okay, punk isn't dead. The spirit of it is maybe still a possibility, but actually the thing *really* is finished."

End of an era: "Punk Is Dead" (2023) by Dexter Dalwood. Image: Dexter Dalwood, courtesy Lisson Gallery

Dalwood's paintings are always fascinating, and these works are no different; here, the added symbolism and allusions make them almost like puzzle boxes waiting to be solved. Though I can't help but feel that the answer to that puzzle tells us less about Englishness than it does about Dalwood's own life. And who is it for anyone to question how somebody defines the signifiers and markers of their own identity? Thus national identity once again passes us by, as elusive as ever.

But by failing to say much about Englishness or the tradition of English painting, Dalwood perhaps inadvertently gets closer to how most of us *actually* experience our national identity: as a vague collection of personal experiences, ideas, attitudes and cultural reference points that only form a coherent sense of self when they aren't interrogated too closely—because it's only when they *are* interrogated that we notice all the contradictions and essential arbitrariness that hold them together. If national identity is any lens with which to view the world, it is one that makes most sense when out of focus.

Dalwood has, likewise, only been able to come at his national identity obliquely: through the reflections in puddles; in images refracted through fragments of broken glass; a figure slumped off to one side, as if slinking off camera. Maybe none of this feels close enough to heart of the matter—but it might be about as close as any of us can get.

Dexter Dalwood: English Painting is on display at Lisson Gallery until 14th December

Art Monthly
November 2024

Dexter Dalwood: English Painting

Lisson Gallery, London, 27 September to 9 November

Dexter Dalwood's ambitious, witty show of new works, his first at Lisson Gallery, samples and channels history, art history and music memory in an attempt to define 'English' painting. His composite methods have developed out of a distinctive use of collage and fragments, but here the visual architecture feels more personal and internal in mood. Did the stylistic and conceptual roots of this show start with his residency in Oaxaca in 2017 or 40 years earlier in 1977, when Dalwood headlined London's legendary Roxy Club playing bass in the short-lived Bristol-based punk band The Cortinas? It is evident that the artist's subsequent move to Mexico provided vital distance for him to make sense of what he left with and what he left behind. In a recent series called 'This Does Not Belong to Me', 2021–22, Dalwood tried to understand a painted history of Mexico, from ancient Mixtec Codices to specially commissioned 20th-century murals; he was particularly drawn to David Alfaro Siqueiros' mural *Mexican History or the Right for Culture*, 1952–56, which highlights the dates that shaped the country's independence. This prompted Dalwood to create a contemporary timeline that included a massacre in 1968 and the disappearance of 43 students in 1994. At a moment of increased violent nationalism and the decolonising of images, could he apply a similar method to interrogating a painted history of England?

Dexter Dalwood, *Bloody Sunday*, 2023

Dalwood's first painting sets up a satirical tone: *English Painting*, 2023, simply offers these two white cursive words on a black ground. It's a wry introduction to an exhibition that channels David Bowie as Lytton Strachey (as painted by Henry Lamb in 1914) and samples King Arthur (modelled on William Morris) from Edward Burne-Jones's epic painting *The Last Sleep of Arthur at Avalon*, 1881–98. *Landscape*, 2023, presents an English pastoral scene, à la Thomas Gainsborough, into which pokes a leg wearing a period white stocking and a pointy black buckled shoe. *Portrait*, 2023, shows a man hefting a shotgun, wearing a black neckerchief and a touch of menace, all rendered in a Frank Auerbach-like impasto. But the apex of colonial, aristocratic power comes crashing down in *Bloody Sunday*, 2023. Here, against a ground of pale orange, a bunch of dark green numbers appear on a zebra crossing. There's a flash of *Abbey Road*, until you realise that the numbers are piling up, their edges softened to make them seem more human. Provoked by the 50th anniversary of the killings of 13 civilians in Derry by the British Army, Dalwood's tricolour image radiates illegibility: it's hard to read, because few want to read it. It emits a similar, stark painfulness as his *Death of David Kelly* painting from 2008 (Interview *AM*425).

Numbers coalesce and float free of coherent dates in several other paintings. In *The Blitz*, 2024, the black-and-red numerals 4–1–9–0 march horizontally and inexorably across a green ground over ghosted rectangles of grey. Two framed paintings lean partially out of sight. Although inspired by the emptying of the National Gallery during the Second World War, Dalwood suggestively questions who decides which works are treasured and displayed; the precariousness of taste, aesthetic values and material accumulation; and the digital threat to painting. In another typical Dalwoodian layer, I discover that the elegant 1930s font was once used by Lyons' coffeehouses and later taken up by the National Socialists – who certainly knew how to make numbers vanish.

Dalwood also remixes his musical past in *Punk is Dead*, 2023, where the red Roxy sign slides somewhere between a black window and a green mirror, into evaporation. *Northern Pop*, 2023, salutes Jasper Johns's *grisaille* checkerboard where abbreviations of northern counties are embossed in black oil and twilight puddles on a grey wintry street. These paintings are too

generative, however, to be nostalgic. There's too much irony and stealing for that. These are determinedly anti-sentimental remnants.

Is there a place for the dandy in geometric grid painting? In *Languid Ziggy*, 2023, Dalwood believes so. Bowie may be slightly off stage, but his presence radiates out and upwards. This is an exquisite portrait made of the soft danger brought by something new, an encounter that pulls you in like a sound wave, a dream or a trip.

Then there is what could be dubbed future channelling in *White Out*, 2024. Reminiscent of Dalwood's earlier paintings set in cars and aeroplanes, a sleek white car door opens onto a white plain where Stonehenge merges with mist. In our drive-by culture, we don't need to leave the car to snap the monument. How can things move us if we are always moving? Dalwood conveys the speed of the evolution of looking, in which we care less and less what the gaze absorbs. We skim. We scan. Stonehenge will become a hologram.

This show could have been called 'English Belonging'. Or 'Belongings'. Or 'Longing', but it could only have been conceived from far away.

Cherry Smyth is a poet and art writer.

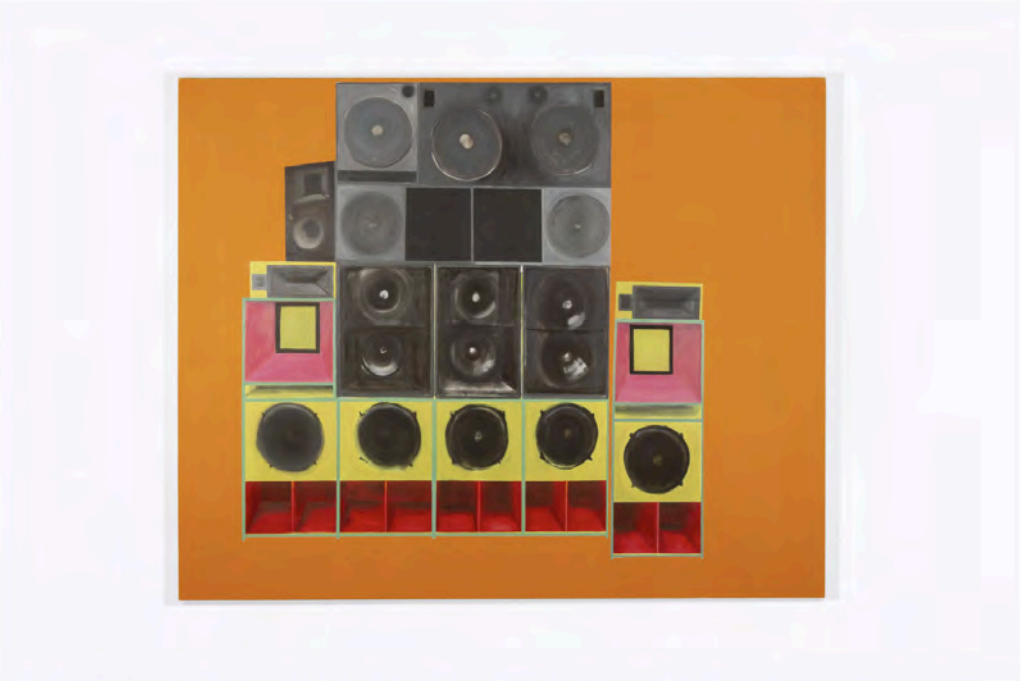
LISSON GALLERY

Time Out
27 August 2024

Time Out

10 London art exhibitions we can't wait to see in September 2024

The best art to wave goodbye to summer with, from Van Gogh to Tracey Emin



Dexter Dalwood, 'Rise Up', 2024. Rawpixel Ltd. © Dexter Dalwood, courtesy Lisson Gallery.

Dexter Dalwood: 'English Painting' at Lisson Gallery

Absence makes the heart grow fonder, or at least more curious. And now that leading British painter Dexter Dalwood has moved permanently to Mexico, he's looking back this way and trying to understand and unravel what English painting can be. These new works take in the whole history of English art, from landscape and horse paintings to the pop art and the Bloomsbury Group.

Dexter Dalwood: 'English Painting' is at Lisson Gallery from Sep 27. Free. More details here.

LISSON GALLERY

Blackqube Magazine
22 April 2021

BLACKQUBE MAGAZINE

NEWS AND VIEWS FROM ART . ARCHITECTURE . DESIGN

DEXTER DALWOOD
A SERIES OF COLLAGE STUDIES AT SIMON LEE GALLERY

Simon Lee Gallery is presenting a series of Dexter Dalwood's collage studies. Although created between 1999 and 2011, these works feel relevant to the present moment in time. Featuring unpeopled, interior scenes, the works speak to the supremacy of the domestic realm at a time when our homes have become inescapable territory.

For Dalwood, his collages have always existed as exercises in composition. In their subsequent translation to large-scale canvases, he preserved their sharp edges and disjoined aesthetic, resulting in a jarring sense of perspective and proportion that both fascinates and disorients the viewer [more ..]

Art Monthly
April 2019

Art MONTHLY

DEXTER DALWOOD INTERVIEWED BY CHERRY SMYTH

The London-based artist discusses non-places and spaces, digitisation and deceleration, disconnection and distance.

Hard 2018

PAINTINGS ABOUT PAINTING

Cherry Smyth: This new series of work, 'What is Really Happening', is starker and darker overall than your previous paintings. Paul Celan once said that poetry 'releases the poet, its crown witness and confidant, from their shared knowledge once it has taken on form'. Do you feel that an accumulation of weight is transferred from you to the painting and leaves you changed?

Dexter Dalwood: I hope that is what is happening. The shift for me is trying to build an experience of thinking about looking at a painting while looking at the painting. I hope that the experience becomes more internal for the viewer because the difference with these paintings compared with my earlier work is that I am not quoting other artists directly to say 'think about all these different references extending out into the relationships with other artists in the past', it's more thinking about my experience right now. What do I want a painting to do?

Because the art historical quotes from other artists, from Francis Bacon to Gerhard Richter, that have previously distinguished your practice are now more subtle or not there in the same way, would you say that a kind of scaffolding has been removed, leaving a more raw and vulnerable experience?

Yes, a friend said that the new paintings are much more accessible to the individual rather than having to get through my 'mesh' – it's not a checklist of things. It's also how I have come round to making these in a slightly different way. I have gone back to wanting to make decisions in front of the painting rather than building up to the idea of making the painting through using collages as a basic template for the painting. It has been a deliberate ploy to avoid the logic of representation, so now every decision is made for the painting and it alone. That has been a big shift.

That is very apparent in the 2018 painting *00:43*, where nothing is reliable in the visual plane of a bedroom interior. The reference to Patrick Caulfield's lampshades is less jokey. The space for a painting on an intense blue wall is blank. You have often played with perspectival construction but this feels more of a personal rather than social loss of balance.

That is the first painting in the series. I was on a residency in Mexico in 2017 and when I came back I did a whole series of paintings based on the title

'An Inadequately Illustrated History of Mexico'. I thought I would have a go even though I wasn't really entitled to. That painting references the 43 students who disappeared in 2014. The chalk outline was going to be used to paint a section of Édouard Manet's *The Execution of Maximilian*, the 1867 version, and then I realised that it didn't need it. That mood prevailed in the whole series of these more recent paintings.

It captures the difficulty of representing state crime: the students' bodies were never found. There is a sense of claustrophobia and strangeness, while with *Kent State*, from 2005, the trail of blood taken from a newspaper photograph makes it explicit. This is a quieter aftermath here, where you leave more of a gap which the viewer's imagination has to jump across.

If that's what you got from it, I'm very pleased, but much of the work is also to do with time and age and what one is interested in and attracted to. Historically, I think of some paintings as examples of a young person's art – Michelangelo Caravaggio, Egon Schiele and Jean-Michel Basquiat. It's a different thing for late, or later, work. The question I continually return to is, where does painting sit now? What do I want to make that I don't feel I see so much?

Transition is a huge theme in this work, not only in technique but also emotionally, culturally and intellectually. *Snow Screen* presents a large, blue cinema screen teeming with what could be tiny shreds of torn-up paper that we read as 'snowflakes'. The two rows of seats are sterile and uninviting. To me it suggests the slip in the cultural currency of cinema, which has lost its sense of luxurious expectation. And also the politics of nature at a time of accelerating climate catastrophe, where all we may have left is a simulation. You seem to be quoting Hiroshi Sugimoto rather than Jean-Luc Godard. I wonder how representation and mark-making are changed by viewing on a tiny, handheld screen.

I was staring at the back of a headrest: it was an easyJet flight and I saw this little pattern and thought, 'Is this finally where the black square ends up?' That whole hard-core project of abstraction boils down to this motif that can be placed anywhere.

For *Hard*, *Lux* and *Snow Screen*, all from 2018, I went back to look at the origin of post-Impressionist painting and how someone like Vincent van Gogh looked at Japanese prints as a new way to simplify things. In Utagawa Hiroshige's prints, like *Sudden Shower over Shin-Ôhashi Bridge and Atake* of 1857, the idea of weather as an element is a 'real thing' but also a signifier of 'snow' or 'rain'. It's not an experience of being in nature but an experience of looking at what's enough to say 'snow'. Also, where do you find this place of contemplation and solitude, given the fact that I don't get it in nature? I'm slightly nervous in nature but when I travel and am not connected to Wi-Fi, I can spend a lot of time thinking. That's an experience that hasn't really been translated into painting. It's a peculiar thing because interiors of transport in the 20th century are so central to film. So, for *Snow Screen*, I made a silkscreen and tessellated it across that expanse of blue. I used the same silkscreen for *Lux*.

***Hard* shows a car dashboard, a windscreen full of black vertical rods of rain and, in the rear-view mirror, nothing but a blur of horizontal brushstrokes. The future is unknowable and the past obscured, so the sensuous, elliptical details of the dashboard force us to be in the present. The handling of the texture and curves of colour point to the body and the feminisation of cars, the love of**

speed. It's hard to decouple from that appeal and yet we have to, so the painting has an elegiac sense of losing a loved body.

These things are tricky to discuss, but I experienced an enormous amount of loss in 2016. It was a strange place from which to make my way back to making paintings again. In Mexico, I recalibrated internally what I wanted to do.

There is a move from the public and social trauma in earlier works, like 2008's *The Death of David Kelly*, to something more private in 2009's *Hard 2*, which depicts the banal, pink tiles of a 1960s or 1970s bathroom and a running tap.

It goes back to a painting I made a long time ago when I was depressed and found myself lying down thinking but looking at the ceiling. I made a series of paintings of ceilings as a response to the idea that what is in your field of vision isn't necessarily what you are thinking about – a middle-distance stare, like when you're running a bath. How could the image embody that?

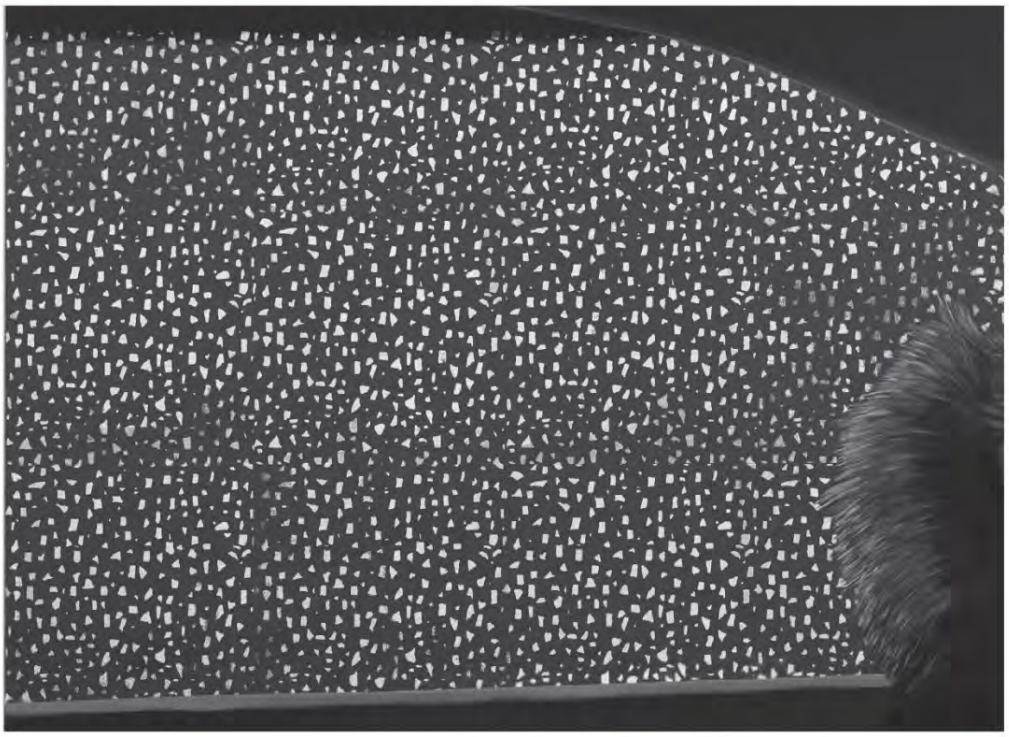
The tiles with their slightly uneven grout suggest that the formalist grid is not enough and the soft, reflected shadows almost stand in for human presences, a more embodied response.

Underneath it all, the paintings are about painting. How can you make a grid painting that's acknowledging where it is from but is also a potentially interesting thing to look at? In the new painting *Laid Out*, I was staring at the back of a headrest: it was an easyJet flight and I saw this little pattern and thought, 'Is this finally where the black square ends up?' That whole hard-core project of abstraction boils down to this motif that can be placed anywhere. I was thinking about that in relation to Paris being the birthplace of modernist painting.

Yes, the body of French painting is 'laid out'. The Arc de Triomphe is toy-like, lacking in majesty. The painting gives off an air of post-Empire, post-Europe. The truncated exit sign in last year's *Coming Down* says simply 'Ex' in English and Arabic and we can't read that without thinking about the false promise of the exit that has subsumed our thoughts for more than two years: the fall of our future. It took a while to notice that the interior of the aeroplane was black – they are never black – such is the seduction of those visual codes.

It is all those things. With these paintings, I have a moment where I plan to do this or that to them and then days or weeks go by and I don't do anything. The dialogue is ended not through completion but through realising that I have hit a resonance that I think is enough. That is a new thing and a much more exciting place to be. It's back to a much more metaphysical experience of what I am experiencing when I'm looking at the painting and not forcing another element into it. It's something I have taken a long time to learn.

The seduction of the expansive view from the aeroplane window has been replaced by the digital screen and how it reorders our sense of agency and where our body begins and ends. You have spoken about the pleasure of the solitude of non-places and aeroplanes being one of the last social spaces where we can escape connection.



Marianne Moore once said that the best cure for loneliness is solitude. A composer I'm working with has renounced his smartphone and gone back to a Nokia to protect a creative and enhancing solitude.

Yes, it's the whole idea of where art is going in the speed of the digital: what do we want from technology and how is art going to change in response to it? Privacy is going to be the hardest thing to have – maybe it will only be available to the really wealthy – and we will all struggle to carve out that space. The work is not against that but there is a deceleration within it, like a shot in a film where someone is standing still and everything is rushing past, and thinking where can I find a place to operate from and how can I hold it.

As well as the dislocation of night and day, of time itself, there is a feeling of statelessness in the work. With the national suspension of belonging, and growing alienation, the work seems to say that where you belong *is* the painting, the moment of its painting. This lively, engaged presence gives the series hope.

Maori culture has the concept that you walk backwards into the future – a fantastic notion. In 2018's *Lufthansa* I imagined flying over an old black-and-white reproduction in an art book of a Paul Cézanne painting. I painted the whole of Mont Saint Victoire but then that part of the composition just flew out of the top – in that, formally, it didn't work. So I brought the window shade down over it. We are leaving the old values, and that sort of painting – the Greenbergian trajectory – is receding faster and faster into the past. To make a black-and-white version from a reproduction of a Cézanne, you can't just flip it into black and white on a computer and make the image from that because of how Cézanne painted and used colour, the hue of the colour – tonally the colours are often exactly the same so that when painted in black and white a yellow can be the same as the green. So you have to invent from the colour reproduction which is an incredible lesson in making a tonal painting from another painting, and having to do the work of that painting to do it. When I was 25 I didn't understand that about Cézanne. It takes a long time of looking and thinking to appreciate the work he did in painting.

Maori culture has the concept that you walk backwards into the future – a fantastic notion. In 2018's *Lufthansa* I imagined flying over an old black-and-white reproduction in an art book of a Paul Cézanne painting.

The mood reminds me of *Flights*, a novel by Olga Tokarczuk, in which the characters try to escape the encumbrances of identity through travel or fugue. She writes, 'When you're traveling … you have to keep an eye on yourself and your place in the world. It means concentrating on yourself, thinking about yourself and looking after yourself. So when you travel all you really encounter is yourself, as if that were the whole point of it.' Yet 'free movement' will soon only be available to the very rich.

The painting *Fire in a Limo* from 2018 presents a serious concern: what are we going to do about the rich? As the Dutch historian Rutger Bregman asked at Davos, when are

billionaires going to pay proper taxes? I have just written about the Fernand Léger show at Tate Liverpool and noted how well he carved out a space against totalitarianism through a conceptual approach to painting. He tried to believe in something. Surely that is what artists are meant to be doing.

As cusp paintings between life and death, between singularity and collectivity, these new paintings both split and cohere the self. The human figure is absent, merely suggested by the containers we have designed around us, whether a hotel room, a taxi, a cinema or an aeroplane. These are anonymous yet familiar places on a global level. Would you say that these paintings give a refuge for an interrupted belonging, a dis-belonging, that has been distressingly amplified by Brexit?

We are now in a situation where the kind of thinking that 20 years ago was absolutely marginalised and seen as nutty has become mainstream within British society. Disgruntled right-wing voices that couldn't have had such a wide constituency then are now regularly heard, predominantly because of the access and amplification that the internet has enabled. And in many places outside London things have changed very little since the Margaret Thatcher era in terms of infrastructure. You can see this total disconnect generally, with people asking 'what am I really a part of … where do I exist?' I went to art school because it was free. I couldn't have gone in my circumstances at the time if it had been fee-paying. All that has now been dismantled. Even art education – a place that was free and a place *to be* free – doesn't feel like that any longer. It also feels a bit retrograde to be medium specific. There has never been a reverse gear in terms of my engagement with painting, but I do wonder whether artists can find that now. What would it have been like if I could have Instagrammed all the paintings I was making while I was at art school? Because when you're a student, you make five or six paintings on each canvas. With this new response level, how can you belong to a practice-based art form? It's not a question of being reactionary and privileging how it used to be, but painting doesn't go away. People still want to look at and think about painting. ∎

Lufthansa 2018

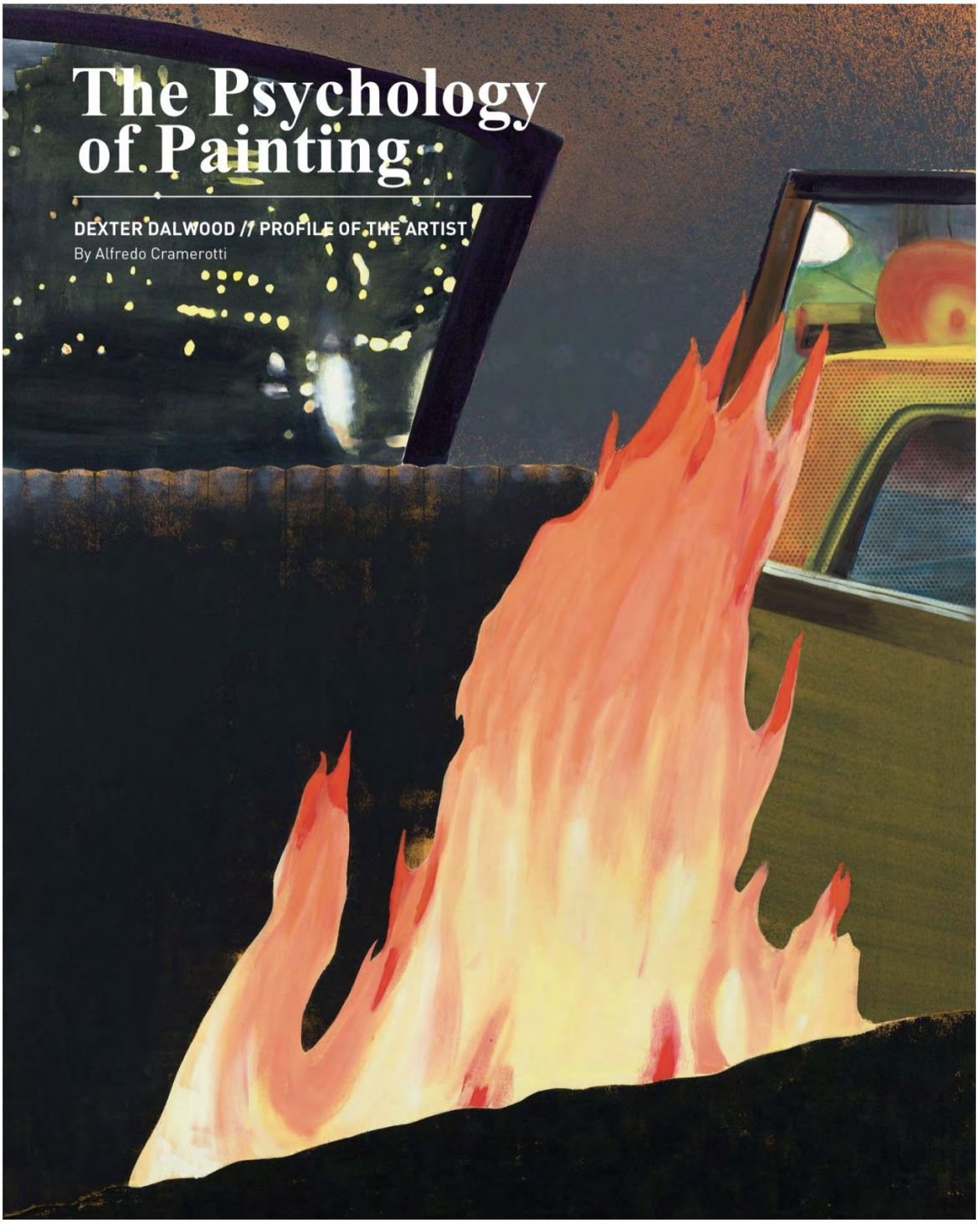
Kent State 2005

Dexter Dalwood's 'What is Really Happening' was at Simon Lee Gallery, London 1 to 30 March 2019.

Cherry Smyth is a poet and art writer. Her new collection *Famished* is published by Pindrop Press and touring as a performance.

The Seen
18 April 2019

THE SEEN



The following conversation between writer Alfredo Cramerotti and artist Dexter Dalwood took place during the preparation for his solo exhibition at Simon Lee Gallery in London in March 2019. Dalwood (b. 1960 in Bristol, England) lives in London and has shown extensively throughout Europe, North America, and Asia. After a studio visit, followed by a number of emails and exchanges, the dialogue developed in sometimes unexpected directions: painting as thought rather than practice; generalization as key to unlock figuration; and the idea of 'working against' as guiding principle. And poignantly, it brought to surface the fact that, for Dalwood, recognizing the end of a work is what preoccupies him the most. Paraphrasing a music cultural meme, it is not where you are from – and not even where you are at; it is, rather, knowing when you are done.

ALFREDO CRAMEROTTI: I wanted to start with the main ideas behind your work—I realize this is a broad question, and of course I have my own reading of your work, but it may not be the same with what you think are the main guiding principles of what you do. I am interested in knowing how you yourself 'read' your work. Can you step outside Dexter for a moment and let me know what you see?

DEXTER DALWOOD: I am first and foremost interested in painting as a conceptual practice. When I say this, I mean the meta-awareness of painting as language: the detached, yet figurative, use of form as language. It has taken me a long time to get to this position. But it is what engages me in still wanting to make paintings at this point in time. In answer to your question, when looking at my work and trying to step outside of it—I think I see disparate images bolted together like words in a sentence that make up a whole.

AC: Did you get any particular source of inspiration for the visual styles of your series of works—for instance, the iconographic 'non-places' series; the absence of people; the 'oblique' gaze; the tangibility of memories, etc.—or did they arrive in relation to the nature of the materials you have used, and locations (either physical, psychological, or situational) you were positioned in?

DD: With this recent series of paintings, I was thinking of going back to the source of several early modernist paintings. I was particularly thinking about Van Gogh, an artist that has never been particularly important to me, who used the formal language of Japanese prints to create a drawing style with more economy. I was looking at some of these prints by Hiroshige and was not interested in the drawing style but the use of 'generalization' in figuration. I mean the simplification of the depiction of something like rain or snow. The visual style of this series started from this point, and as a way of painting an assumption of something—not unlike a label, saying 'here, this is rain,' or 'this is snow,' etc. That was the starting point. How the paintings formulated had to do with seeing these elements from within the enclosed space of a car, an airplane, or a corridor, all of which lead to a prevailing mood that was somehow psychological.

AC: Can you delve into the technical aspects of the works? Such as the gathering of raw material, software or hardware (in the wide sense; they could be thoughts and bodies) used, as well as the selection and editing process? What are some of the particular challenges you (and your team, or the collaborators you work with) have faced in realizing the works?

DD: When it comes to painting, the answers can become very 'painter nerdy' as they are about the use of paint, etc. To be brutally honest, in this series, I liked to set up something to work 'against.' I had often put down a ground color of neon yellow, and then spent a lot of time at the beginning of the painting trying to get rid of it—this is to do with 'beginnings,' and trying to just start a painting and make decisions from there on in. Earlier in my work, I would always begin with a collage, but now I prefer to start with one or two elements, and then begin to make decisions in front of the painting. The editing process has to do with the judgement of when something is 'enough.' What takes a long time in painting is knowing when something is 'enough,' and most importantly, when something is finished. I have never worked on a painting and then walked away and thought, "It's finished." It just comes down to realizing—after perhaps two or three days—that it is no longer preoccupying you or screaming out for attention. Then, after a longer period you realize it is done.

AC: Can you tell me about the relationship you want or aim to have with the viewer? In your opinion, could the visitor go 'through' the work, but also miss it? Or is the viewer able to move from and to it, around it and beside it, but not really see it—or experience it from an 'external' point of view? I am thinking in particular of the "on-places" series. Is the work meant to be 'faced' so to speak? What is the underlying approach to this relationship with the viewer?

DD: I do not think of my work as a 'gate' that the visitor can go through. I think of the viewer when making paintings, as I am also thinking of myself as a viewer of the painting. When I am looking at a painted surface, the question I ask myself is "What do I want to see now?" I hope that the viewer also thinks that when looking at my work. The question is: does it engage them and also resist being consumed for a Nano-second? If it does, and they do not dismiss it, then the process of my work for a viewer is one of looking and thinking about what is in front of them. If that process begins, then in some way my job is done.

"...I think I see disparate images bolted together like words in a sentence that make up a whole."

—DEXTER DALWOOD

AC: Tell me a secret about your work. Even a small one.

DD: Due to a knife cut, my blood is mixed into the red of one of these paintings

—

Dexter Dalwood lives and works in London, UK. He received his Bachelor of Fine Arts from Central Saint Martins, London, UK and his Master of Fine Arts from the Royal College of Art, London, UK. Dalwood has exhibited widely over the last three decades, including a major survey show at Tate St Ives, UK (2010) that travelled to FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France and CAC Málaga, Spain and was subsequently nominated for the Turner Prize at Tate Britain, London, UK in the same year. He has also presented solo shows at Galerie Hubert Winter, Vienna, Austria (2017), Simon Lee Gallery, Hong Kong (2016) and London, UK (2014), Kunsthaus Centre Pasquart, Biel, Switzerland (2013) and Nolan Judin, Berlin, Germany (2011). Group exhibitions include *Hello World. Revising a Collection*, Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, Germany (2018), *Michael Jackson: On the Wall*, National Portrait Gallery, London, UK (2018), Painters' Painters, Saatchi Gallery, London, UK (2016), *The Painting Show*, a touring exhibition organized by the British Council that travelled to Korea (2017), Ireland (2017) and Lithuania (2016), Fighting History, Tate Britain, London, UK (2015), *Le Corps de l'Absence*, Musée des Beaux-Arts et d'Archéologie, Châlons-en-Champagne, France (2013), and Dublin Contemporary, Dublin, Ireland (2011). His work is in major private and public collections, including Tate, London, UK, British Council Collection, London, UK, Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester, UK, FRAC Champagne-Ardenne, Reims, France and Hamburger Bahnhof - Museum für Gegenwart, Berlin, Germany.

TITLE PAGE:
Dexter Dalwood, *Fire in a Limo*, 2018. Oil on canvas, 63.75 x 51.12 inches. Courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.

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PAGE 145:
Dexter Dalwood, *Driving Back After the Argument*, 2018. Oil on canvas, 51.62 x 38.25 inches. Courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.

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PAGE 146:
Dexter Dalwood, *Hard 2*, 2019. Oil on canvas, 63.75 x 51.25 inches. Courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.

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PAGE 147:
Dexter Dalwood, *Hard*, 2018. Oil on canvas, 51.62 x 38.25 inches. Courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.

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ABOVE:
Dexter Dalwood, *Coming Down*, 2018. Oil on canvas, 59.12 x 73.25 inches. Courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery.

Artnet
21 March 2019

artnet news

Dexter Dalwood's Contemplative New Show Will Make You Stop, Think, and Appreciate Painting

"It's like standing still while everything else rushes past you," the venerable British artist tells artnet News.

Dexter Dalwood, *ON AIR* (2018). Courtesy of Simon Lee.

"Life moves pretty fast," a wise man once said. "If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

You don't have to tell Dexter Dalwood this. It's been on the British artist's mind a great deal lately, informing the paintings in his newest exhibition, "What is Really Happening", on view now at Simon Lee's London location.

Each of Dalwood's canvases depicts a solitary moment in a small, quiet space: a dark car interior, a plaintive pink bathtub, a moonlit bedroom after midnight. In many cases, the stillness of the scene is emphasized through a peek into a frenzied environment nearby—a rainstorm shown through a streaked windshield, for instance, or a doorway opening to a glowing red recording studio with a drum set.

Dexter Dalwood, *Hard* (2018). Courtesy of Simon Lee.

"I was thinking, 'Where can we find moments of solitude, moments when we can be disconnected from the anxieties of the every day and have the time to think internally about what's going on with your life?'" the artist tells artnet News. "Often, I find, this happens when I'm traveling. Air travel, in particular, when there's no wifi connection—that's when I find this delicious period of time when you can just sit and think."

Dalwood's scenes appear at once familiar and strangely foreign, full of objects we see every day, but never actually observe. They're the things you stare at blankly when you're thinking deeply about something else.

"I think that's what fascinated me—trying to make images that occupy your visual field, but aren't necessarily what you're thinking about when you're looking at them," he says. "It's like when you're looking at the back of a headrest in a place—although that's in your visual field, it's not necessarily what's going on inside your head."

Dexter Dalwood, *Fire in a Limo* (2018). Courtesy of Simon Lee.

Choosing these overlooked objects, the venerable artists aims to engender the opposite effect—creating imagery that, as he says, connects with the viewer to the point "where, for just a nano-second, they can look at something and not just consume it. In that moment they are thinking about what they're looking at in front of them."

For Dalwood, the anxiety of time rushing past is mirrored by the art world's own anxiety over the state of painting, a slow medium in a world that's growing faster by the day. It's a concern that's long been at the core of his practice. It's also why, despite the show's rainy, nighttime scenes and gloomy interiors, he actually sees it as being quite hopeful.

Dexter Dalwood, *Coming Down* (2018). Courtesy of Simon Lee.

"The idea of being alone with yourself still seems to be a valuable and hopeful thing to me," he says. "It's like standing still while everything else rushes past you. I suppose I'm optimistic about painting still existing as a thing to stand in front of in 2019. That's life-affirming to me."

Evening Standard
29 November 2016

EveningStandard.

Bay of Pigs painting is the highlight of Saatchi Gallery exhibition days after Fidel Castro's death

The show is devoted to the art of painting

ROBERT DEX | Tuesday 29 November 2016 |

Exhibits: Dexter Dalwood's 2004 work Bay Of Pigs *Dexter Dalwood*

An artistic interpretation of the Bay of Pigs invasion – the US government's doomed attempt to unseat Fidel Castro in 1961 – is going on show in a new exhibition just days after the Cuban leader's death.

Dexter Dalwood's 2004 work, described as a "haunting tropical image somewhere between vacation brochure and Apocalypse Now", shows black smoke billowing across a tropical landscape and is one of a series of works at the Saatchi Gallery in a show devoted to the art of painting.

The CIA-backed invasion, named after the Cuban bay where an exile force landed, was defeated by Castro's forces within days. Castro died last Friday aged 90 and the Communist state, which has been ruled by his brother Raul for years, has declared nine days of national mourning.

Dalwood, from Bristol, is one of nine painters whose work is included in the show. South African Ansel Krut and Norwegian Bjarne Melgaard are among the other artists featured.

Ansel Krut's work (Alex Lentati)

Nigel Hurst, chief executive of the gallery in Sloane Square, said: "More and more artists are turning to this age-old practice as a counterbalance to the speed and ease of image-making in our hyper-digital age."

Entry to the Painters' Painters exhibition is free. It opens tomorrow and runs until February 28.

Phaidon
5 October 2016

PHAIDON

Dexter Dalwood - Why I Paint

Exploring the creative processes of tomorrow's artists today - as featured in Vitamin P3

Dexter Dalwood photographed by Paul McGeiver

Bristol born Dexter Dalwood's recent paintings aim to slow down the viewer. He is concerned that the medium has the potential to give everything away too quickly, especially when compared with other contemporary disciplines such as performance, film or video – which require a commitment of time – or even sculpture, for which a viewer must move through physical space in order to completely 'take in' the work. Painting, in contrast, is fully contained within its edges, and even the largest of canvases can be consumed with a cursory glance.

To combat this, Dalwood creates visual collages with paint that combine disparate elements. With carefully balanced compositions, his paintings offer no immediate resting point for the eye. Recognizable objects or familiar motifs hint at connections between diverse parts and the works become a puzzle to be solved, offering to reward the viewer willing to take the time to pause, look and think.

Dexter Dalwood - Old Bailey 2014, courtesy Tate

Combining well-known and more obscure art historical references, Dalwood draws on a deep knowledge of the history of painting, seeking out overlooked corners of artworks to quote in his own work, often uniting different periods of art history, for example juxtaposing fragments from works by Delacroix, Gauguin, Braque and Lichtenstein in Yellow Mirror (2016) (pictured below) which he describes as a 'bric-a-brac shop of Modernism'. Here, the Vitamin P3-featured painter tells us what interests, inspires and spurs him on.

Dexter Dalwood - Greek Bailout, 2015 courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery

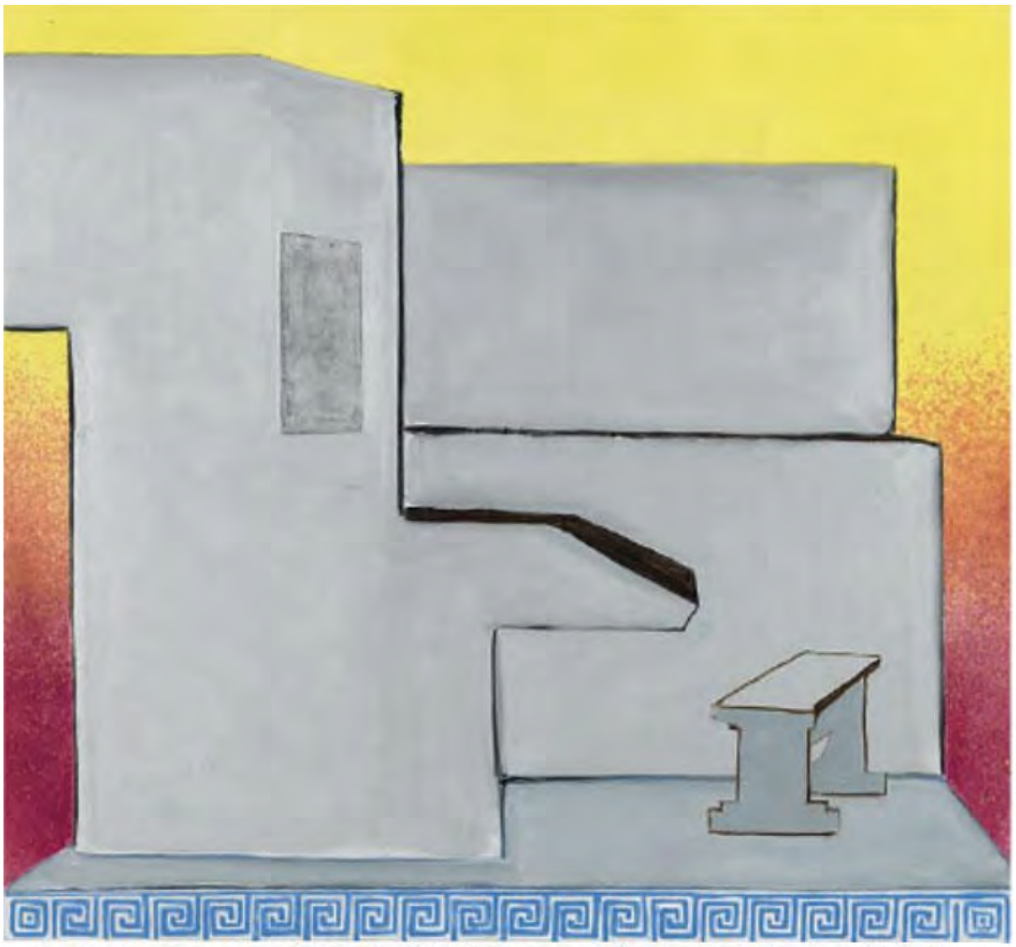
Who are you? I am a painter who lives in London.

What's on your mind right now? How can I resolve the bottom half of this new painting? What is the painting equivalent of film editing in the sense of 'holding long and cutting short '

How do you get this stuff out? By remaining true to my obsessions.

How does it fit together? Form - everything else evaporates.

What brought you to this point? A great deal of trial and error. A huge enthusiasm for and belief in art. Thinking about what I don't see enough of but would dearly love to see. Sheer bloody perseverance. The total excitement of looking at and thinking about painting.



Dexter Dalwood - Mao's Study (Remix), 2015 courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery

Can you control it? No not really – to be in control is different to being able to guide the way things unfold. Time itself has a phenomenal effect on what I am interested in as an artist – every stage of life throws up a completely new set of criteria for consideration. What surprises me now is that the art that arrested my 18 year old self wandering through a museum is completely different to the art that stopped me in my tracks ten, twenty, years later or that I stop to contemplate now. As I work, my interests and how they influence the way I make a painting shift and change without any conscious control from me.

Have you ever destroyed one of your paintings? I have destroyed quite a few paintings. There is nothing more liberating than finally taking the knife to a canvas that (you just can't kid yourself) will ever be resolved. Also it's a form of editing. Painters need to edit just as much as anyone.

Dexter Dalwood - Yellow Mirror, 2015 courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery

What's next for you, and what's next for painting? Reading early twentieth century texts about what might be next for art makes for sobering reading. No one talks much about the philosophy of Suprematism any longer...When I studied at the RCA there was a postgraduate course in holography. Now, the idea of the hologram as an art form is laughable. I don't think there is a what's next for painting – this would suppose that it needs one.

Vitamin P3 New Perspectives In Painting is the third in an ongoing series that began with Vitamin P in 2002 and Vitamin P2 in 2011. For each book, distinguished critics, curators, museum directors and other contemporary art experts are invited to nominate artists who have made significant and innovative contributions to painting. The series in general, and Vitamin P3 in particular, is probably the best way to become an instant expert on tomorrrow's painting stars today.

Dexter Dalwood - Midday 2012 available on Artspace

Blouin Artinfo
20 March 2016

BLOUINARTINFO

Dexter Dalwood Brings Propaganda to China

BY SAMUEL SPENCER | MARCH 20, 2016

Dexter Dalwood's "Greek Bailout," 2015.
(Courtesy of the artist and Simon Lee Gallery)

RELATED

VENUES
Simon Lee Gallery Hong Kong
Simon Lee Gallery

ARTISTS
Dexter Dalwood

In his second collaboration with Simon Lee Gallery, British collagist-painter Dexter Dalwood brings the exhibition "Propaganda Painting" to Hong Kong. ARTINFO spoke to Dalwood about the upcoming solo show.

In the lead up to the exhibition, Dalwood was interested in what he called "the relevance of preexisting visual images," as well as "the contemporary relevance of painting."

"I chose 'Propaganda Painting' as the title of the show, as I was thinking about the Latin origin of the word propaganda, which is 'congregation for the propagation of the faith,' " said Dalwood. "I think this is particularly pertinent in reference to the painted image today." He gave this title to one of the paintings that he felt "most connected to this idea" — and with that, the show had what Dalwood called its "title track."

Following his "London Paintings" series, shown at Simon Lee's London gallery in 2014, Dalwood set his sights on China. Taking full advantage of his first solo exhibition in Greater China, Dalwood created allusion-rich works that feature many defining moments in 20th-century Chinese history, complemented by references to artists of the era.

What was it specifically about China that so appealed? "The invitation to exhibit in a country I had never visited really appealed to me," Dalwood said. "I have always been interested in the idea of place within artwork and particularly in artists who make work that is not about their own culture or history. While making this series I was thinking about the work being shown in Hong Kong and consequently my own relationship to its recent history. That relationship is as informed by images as much as by what I have read."

These Western images of China are seeded throughout exhibition. In Dalwood's witty and anarchic paintings, specters of Mao (swimming in the Yangtze) and Nixon rub shoulders with Lichtenstein's and Picasso's signature brushstrokes.

"I usually start a new series of paintings ruminating on a theme of some sort," he explained. However, he tried to keep the themes broad. "This is deliberately not particularly pre-planned, as I like to see what the work starts to suggest. But knowing that the work was coming to Hong Kong, although there weren't specific events for every work, I allowed a lot of different associated ideas to connect up."

However, Dalwood does not approach these events with any particular agenda. "The paintings don't have a direct message, per se — I'm not trying to put across a particular political viewpoint," he said. "I want to bring together various references from political and artistic history and propose them in a new context of the painting, to see if they become something beyond the sum of their parts. To that extent I am only really interested in whether they work as a painting, not about conveying a message."

Dalwood's "Greek Bailout," 2015, for example, evokes the Greek financial crisis of 2009 by placing an Ancient Greek bowl at the center of the Last Supper. "The title refers to a very recent event in European economic history," he said, noting, however, that "the imagery comes from a wide range of sources and time periods, from the Ancient Greeks to Warhol, reworking probably the most iconic religious painting ever."

This barrage of references — many easy to miss on a first or even second viewing — is more than a gimmick. By juxtaposing so many time periods, historic events, and pieces of iconography, Dalwood highlights the process by which we consume images and the artificiality of history.

In a sense, when he references Mao, it is a Mao that is himself a collage. He evokes not only the historical person but also how he has been reflected through media. Dalwood's Chairman is the Mao of history but also "Mao," Warhol's 1972 screen print or the character of Mao from John Adams' opera "Nixon in China." In "Propaganda Painting," identity is multiple and filtered heavily through culture and media.

"It fascinated me that the image of Mao is now so neutral in the West that it can become almost meaningless when reproduced on plates or T-shirts," said Dalwood. "I would suggest that this is primarily because of Warhol's choice to use it in the '70s, though his choice had been influenced by the radical chic of Maoism through the post-1968 Paris generation of Jean-Luc Godard, etc. The image of Mao's head then becomes synonymously linked to 20th-century art history — it becomes iconic and recedes historically in time."

On paper, this may sound like dry postmodern academia, but Dalwood has an eye for engaging images that makes these works effective on their own terms. Propaganda, memorabilia, and academia collide headlong, and theory is never presented without wit, which is perhaps why his work has been so in demand.

The City Magazine
February 2016

THE CITY MAGAZINE

OUT OF HIS HEAD

Mark & Hannah Hayes-Westall have been working in, and writing about, contemporary art on and off for almost 20 years. Each month they introduce an artist that should appear on your agenda

THIS MONTH: **DEXTER DALWOOD**

WHAT'S SO INTERESTING? Sharing a thought is an amazingly intimate experience, and when generated by artists, can be a powerful tool in controlling our feelings about events and people; what we call history. It is the ability to skillfully generate a connection between what's in his head and what's in that of the viewer that makes British artist Dexter Dalwood's work so emotionally compelling.

Dalwood is a painter who has refined the use of the vocabulary of painting to deploy conscious and subconscious associations in the heads of his viewers for many years. The work that generated wider awareness of his name was a series of paintings of imagined personal spaces belonging to celebrities, where works like *Kurt Cobain's Greenhouse* (2000) used our pre-existing understanding of the dead singer's milieu and mental state to create a narrative around an easy chair, pot plant and view over Seattle's harbour front. Drenched with celebrity news, these imagined landscapes gave us alternative histories, new ways of understanding the way we think about the role of prominent people in our shared experience.

In his most recent exhibition, 2015's *London Paintings*, Dalwood's use of viewer associations as a material with which to create narrative evolved further, with segments of works reflecting the style of famous works by other painters, from a clutter of Warhol-style flowers in *Too Many Flowers* (2015) to a brilliant, Hockney-esque turquoise swimming pool cutting through the murk in *The Thames Below Waterloo* (2014), a painting which also nods to Monet.

Using scraps of experience, memory and narrative is a technique that allows the painter to establish powerful connections with key moments in our history and one that has led to him being labelled as a leading contemporary history painter, alongside the likes of Belgium's Luc Tuymans, capturing the sense and spirit of our times.

Sometimes this is explicitly political,

FIND THE WORK

SIMON LEE GALLERY
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simonleegallery.com

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT
Kurt Cobain's Greenhouse, 2000; Half Moon Street, 2014; Too Many Flowers, 2015; Interior at Paddington, 2014

as in *1989* (2014) – a painting of Trafalgar Square's statue of George IV seated on his horse shows only the rear of the horse and plinth as if seen from below. The painting's title, when taken with unusual angle of view and the hazy blue skies capture the sense of being at the heart of that summer's Poll Tax riot.

In other works, the sense of a personal history feels stronger, with glimpses of nights out in *Roundhouse* (2014) and *Marquee* (2012) while a series of domestic scenes including *Interior at Paddington* (2014) and *Half Moon Street* (2014) hint at the peripatetic life of an artist, with domesticity found in a wide array of London locations. Real or imagined, these quotidian scenes are connected for us by references to other painters, and by our own familiarity with the subject matter.

Dexter Dalwood lives and works in London. He received a BA from Central Saint Martins, and an MA from the Royal College of Art. Nominated for the Turner Prize in 2010, he has been the subject of mid-career survey exhibitions at institutions including Tate St Ives, Frac Champagne-Ardenne, CAC Malaga, and the Kunsthaus Centre d'art Centre PasquArt, Biel, Switzerland. He is currently preparing for a show of work in Hong Kong, where he will continue to examine a broad range of subjects quoting cultural and historical references, as well as the history of painting itself.

Time Out
9 June 2015

Time Out

Art

Battle stations

Artists are lovers, not fighters. But, as a new Tate Britain show proves, conflict and catastrophe are never far from their thoughts. **Martin Coomer** looks at four works in the show and the clashes they commemorate

1 Britain v France

'The Death of Major Peirson, 6 January 1781', 1783, by John Singleton Copley

Today we think of Jersey as an offshore cash dump for short-haul tax dodgers, but it's the island's disputed sovereignty that lies at the bloody heart of Copley's 12-footer. The scene celebrates our defeat of the French. Its focus is Francis Peirson, a young major who was slain by a French sniper. Defiantly red, white and blue, Copley's painting is in effect a Union Jack on a massive scale. Its symbolism wasn't lost on the thousands who queued to see it when it was first shown in public in 1784.

2 Man v nature

'The Deluge', 1920, by Winifred Knights

With scenes of watery chaos by Francis Danby and JMW Turner on display, the Tate show reveals how the Flood was a big theme in nineteenth-century art. Winifred Knights presents a rather uptight, Bloomsburyite version of the Biblical story yet her painting shows how the theme persisted into the twentieth century. That younger artists such as Dexter Dalwood have picked up on it in recent years tells us that, while few people believe in the Bible story like they did in Turner's time, the threat of climate catastrophe is once again at the forefront of our minds.

3 Pretty much everyone v the poll tax

'The Poll Tax Riots', 2005, by Dexter Dalwood

Dexter Dalwood was in Trafalgar Square in March 1990 to experience the most serious riot London had seen for a century, when thousands protested against the government's gobsmackingly unfair replacement for domestic rates. Fifteen years later, he made this painting about the event. But it's not a straightforward history painting, more an alternative reality, full of memories of the time as well as references from art history.

4 Maggie v the miners

'The Battle of Orgreave Archive', 2001, by Jeremy Deller

Comprising texts, videos and even clothing (jacket, pictured), Deller's installation is part artwork, part archive. A little confusingly, it commemorates both the Battle of Orgreave – the confrontation between striking miners and the police that occurred at the Orgreave Coking Plant in Yorkshire on 18 June 1984 – and Deller's own re-enactment, 'The Battle of Orgreave', filmed in 2000 and featuring some of the miners from the original clash. Their feelings about what took place are parcelled up in this profoundly moving work. It's a twenty-first-century update of the idea of history painting that actively engages with how the past gets recorded and remembered.

'Fighting History' is at Tate Britain. Tue Jun 9 ▶ Sep 13. £9.50-£12.

IN THE KNOW... *'Fighting History'*

How big's the show?
Though it takes in a vast sweep of history, this show's not really a whopper. Around **40 works are on display**, ranging from epic eighteenth-century canvases by the likes of Joshua Reynolds to a photograph by artist/film director Steve McQueen.

How long will I need?
An hour ought to be enough, unless you plan to watch Jeremy Deller's 'The Battle of Orgreave' all the way through, in which case you'll need at least two.

When's the best time to go?
Weekdays and **weekend mornings** are generally quietest.

Who'll love it most?
There's no denying it: **this is a show for boys**. We reckon boyfriends, brothers and teenage nephews will be in their element poring over these passionate paintings. And, of course, dads. Book tickets for a **Father's Day treat on June 21** and you'll have one very happy pater.

The Guardian
29 May 2015

The Guardian

Fighting History – Antony Beevor on paintings of conflict and catastrophe

The death of Captain Cook, Amelia Earhart's aeroplane, the miners' strike ... the new Tate Britain show ranges widely in its exploration of disputes, patriotism and martyrdom in history painting

The Death of Major Peirson, 6 January 1781 by John Singleton Copley, from Tate Britain's Fighting History exhibition.

A painting at the Royal Academy Exhibition of 1771 caused a sensation. Benjamin West's *The Death of General Wolfe*, which depicted the moment of victory in the battle of Quebec 12 years earlier, helped break the convention that soldiers in historical scenes should be shown wearing classical costume.

West, from Pennsylvania, was an ambitious young American making his way in London with paintings of historical and mythological subjects. Two commissions from George III had already marked an important step in his professional and social ascent. The success of this new painting was critical to his career. His decision to paint his characters in modern dress, rather than in togas, disturbed the old guard of the art establishment and several of his supporters, includingJoshua Reynolds and the king. Yet West had rightly sensed that it would appeal to the public and win over the doubters.

Rather like Hollywood directors in the late 20th century, painters of history scenes often genuflected in a form of ancestor worship, their works deliberately echoing earlier great art. West's depiction of the sacrificial hero of empire invoked religious images of Christ's descent from the cross.

Few people really expected such paintings to be an accurate account of the event. Reynolds himself referred to "the vulgar idea of imitation". Among those who attended the exhibition, the actor David Garrick and William Pitt, the former prime minister, studied West's painting of Wolfe. Both men felt that he had made Wolfe appear too sad. In their view, he should have made the hero look ecstatic as he died, knowing that victory was his on hearing the cry: "They run! They run!" Garrick even demonstrated to an admiring crowd in front of the painting what Wolfe's expression should have been.

The exhibition was a huge success, with more than 20,000 catalogues sold at a shilling each. Pall Mall was impassable. Members of the aristocracy were the chief buyers, but patriotic art was also about to become the social currency of the manufacturer and the nabob aspiring to join the landed gentry. The seven years' war, with Wolfe's capture of Quebec at its symbolic summit, accelerated the development of British nationalism in time for its epic struggle against the French revolutionaries and the "Corsican tyrant".

West's most famous work is not in the forthcoming Tate Britain exhibition,*Fighting History – 250 Years of British History*; instead there is an even more dramatic work: *The Death of Major Peirson, 6 January 1781*, which was painted by his protégé and fellow Anglo-American John Singleton Copley. This painting, which commemorates the successful counter-attack against a small French force invading Jersey, raised British morale after all the humiliations in the American war of independence. It purports to show the moment when Peirson's black servant shoots dead the rifleman who had killed his master, but once again there are considerable doubts about the veracity of the story. Nationalist propaganda was never scrupulous with the truth.

Colonel Tarleton's portrait, by Joshua Reynolds. Photograph: The National Gallery

The exhibition also presents the shamelessly dashing portrait by Joshua Reynolds of the controversial Colonel Tarleton, who was portrayed in Mel Gibson's film, *Patriot*, as a war criminal. (This was at the time when Hollywood, as Gibson acknowledged, felt that it was time "to give the Germans a break"). But as was rightly pointed out at the time, the film was "a stinker" in its corruption of history, showing black volunteers fighting alongside their white American brothers, when in fact their only hope of escaping slavery was to reach British-held territory.

Singleton Copley is also represented with what one can only call another *tableau mourant*, *The Collapse of the Earl of Chatham in the House of Lords, 7 July 1778*, which is shown with two studies. Chatham – William Pitt – although sympathetic to the American colonies, has just had a fatal stroke while making a speech against granting them independence. To make the incident more dramatic, Singleton Copley has painted the peers in their ceremonial robes, which they had not been wearing on that day.

There is also a compulsion, particularly in battle paintings, to telescope the action so that everything can be shown at the same moment. Peirson, whose body is shown emerging from the mêlée, was killed well beforehand. In Philip James de Loutherbourg's *The Battle of the Nile* (1800) we see the volcanic explosion as the French flagship L'Orient blows up, but also the survivors of other ships sunk subsequently clinging to wreckage at the same time. George Arnald's painting in Greenwich of the same instant, but with a different perspective, uses the same device.

Richard Eurich, an official war artist of a very different era, attempts to resolve the problem of telescoping in *The Landing at Dieppe, 19th August 1942* by dividing the canvas into a triptych, with the left-hand portion showing the

• *Fighting History* is at Tate Britain from 9 June to 13 September, tate.org.uk. Antony Beevor's most recent book, *Ardennes 1944 – Hitler's Last Gamble*, is published by Viking.

a casualty rate of 60% in a single day. It does not even manage to convey the horrific chaos of battle, which even the most inaccurate depictions usually manage.

Johan Zoffany's *The Death of Captain James Cook, 14 February 1779*, was influenced by West's *Death of Wolfe*. In this unfinished painting, Zoffany did not bother to recreate accurately the chaotic incident at the water's edge in Hawaii. He seems to have been more interested in depicting a tragic clash between a British hero and the idealised "noble savage" of the Enlightenment.

History paintings of the late 18th century and the Victorian era were usually a narrative version of a dramatic event, suggesting moral or patriotic lessons. *The Boyhood of Raleigh* by John Everett Millais makes one think of a GA Henty novel. The sailor on the beach pointing out to sea while the two boys listen in rapt attention could almost be the high Victorian predecessor to Kitchener's poster, only in this case the message was "Your Empire Needs You". The painting of which Millais was most proud is also included, although critics never regarded it as one of his best. In *"Speak! Speak!"* a young Roman, in a suspiciously Tudor four-poster bed, awakes at dawn after reading the letters of his lost love during the night. The curtains of the bed are parted and there she stands silently, either in spirit form or mysteriously resurrected. In the scene – created in his own house but based on the turret room of a Perthshire castle – Millais was clearly carried away by his own imagination.

John Minton's *The Death of Nelson*. Photograph: www.bridgemanart.com

John Minton's *The Death of Nelson* (1952), on the other hand, is a clever reworking of the original by Daniel Maclise. Minton's picture is another *tableau mourant*, but avoids both the ancestor worship of the neo-classicists and the sarcastic pastiche of the angry young painters who came after him. He creates a theatrical effect on the quarter-deck of HMS Victory, with a spotlight on the dying Nelson and Captain Hardy while all the other characters around are left in the shadows.

Fighting History is not just about military events – in fact the subject constitutes only a small minority of the paintings included. Tate Britain is taking a very broad view. Their use of the word "history" means almost any painting telling a story, whether theatrical, classical, biblical, mythological or political. West is represented by one of his earlier classical paintings, *Cleombrotus Ordered into Banishment by Leonidas II, King of Sparta*.

At a rapid glance it might be a biblical scene, but the armed men on the left watch as their king gives in to the tearful pleas of his daughter to spare her husband, who has conspired against him. He is to be exiled instead of executed. Edward Poynter's *A Visit to Aesculapius* depicts Venus showing the thorn in her foot to the god of medicine, while her attendants, the Three Graces, pose naked beside her. By 1880, the art establishment seems to

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The Poll Tax Riots by Dexter Dalwood. © Dexter Dalwood

There are five paintings of the Biblical flood, ranging from Turner at the start of the 19th century through to Dexter Dalwood's work of 2006. The subject of Stanley Spencer's lesser known painting, *The Centurion's Servant*, appealed

to him from the story in St Luke, and tempted him to reset it in his own house giving his own features to the youth on the bed.

An interesting departure, even by the standards of this heterogeneous exhibition, is Walter Richard Sickert's *Miss Earhart's Arrival*, which ostensibly commemorates Amelia Earhart's transatlantic solo flight. But Sickert's real interest was in her sudden celebrity. He used photographs from the popular press, and within seven days produced his painting of a crowd packed round her aeroplane, with the rain pelting down diagonally.

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he most recent creations, some of which veer towards the agit-prop, deliberately fight all notions of patriotic history. Jeremy Deller's installation *The Battle of Orgreave Archive (An Injury to One Is an Injury to All)*, tries to portray the 1984 miners' strike as another English civil war. He uses documents, objects, videos and other archival material to recreate the most dramatic clash of the strike by the National Union of Mineworkers. His *The History of the World* is essentially a four-metre flow chart depicting recent history as stemming from acid house and brass bands, once again bringing in the miners' strike. In many ways it is a lament for a lost industrial age and its tribal solidarity.

Other modern works include *The Poll Tax Riots* by Dalwood, Rita Donagh's *Reflection on Three Weeks in May 1970* and Richard Hamilton's *Kent State* (a screenprint of a shot student), and *The citizen*, a diptych about the dirty protest by republican prisoners in the Maze, with excrement smeared all over the walls. The moderns are, no doubt, supposed to be shockingly juxtaposed against not just the heroic pictures, but also the elegant and romantic Roman scenes of Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema.

The clash between the scarlet-uniformed battle pictures of the 18th century and Deller's obsession with the miners' strike highlights an overlooked link. The collective loyalties, both of the traditional officer class and the trade unions, collapsed at the same time. This was no mere coincidence. Margaret Thatcher certainly did not bring this about single-handed, but her policies accelerated the process during the mid-to-late 1980s, along with the collapse of the Soviet Union, the end of the cold war, the financial big bang, the end of exchange controls, the invention of the internet, the "less deferential society", the new individualism and, above all, globalisation. This alone should provide plenty of material for reflection, along with a number of powerful but bewilderingly varied pictures.

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Artillery
3 March 2015

ARTILLERY

LONDON CALLING

Dexter Dalwood: London Paintings at Simon Lee Gallery

by Sue Hubbard

Dexter Dalwood,Interior at Paddington, 2014

"To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it the way it really was," wrote Walter Benjamin. "It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger." Dexter Dalwood, a previous nominee for the Turner Prize, examines in this new exhibition how history is constructed, interpreted and remembered through the making of paintings and how it might continue to be painted. London provides a topos for this exercise in representation. It has long been a setting and subject matter for the artist but here he gives an idiosyncratic take on the city as specific sites and locations are reconstructed from a collage of personal, as well as cultural memories, and political history.

Dexter Dalwood, Thames below Waterloo Bridge, 2014

Born in Bristol, UK, in 1960, he was a member of the Cortinas, a punk band, before studying at Central St. Martins and the Royal College of Art. Many of his past images have been culled from popular culture, including Kurt Cobain's greenhouse and Lord Lucan's hideout. The "London Paintings" signal something of a shift from a rather formal stance to one that is more fluid and interpretive. From the first there are interwoven quotes from art history; from Picasso, Walter Sickert and the Camden Town painters, as well as Patrick Caufield. The *Thames below Waterloo* (all works mentioned are 2014) not only nods at Monet's paintings of London but, with the inclusion of the area of bright swimming-pool-blue at the bottom of the canvas, to David Hockney's California paintings. To walk around Dalwood's exhibition is a bit like a game of painterly charades or guess the artist. There are hints, references and seductive clues that make demands of the viewer in an unstable and slightly inchoate world. Interpretation is never quite within reach. In *Half Moon Street*, a bunch of flowers in a vase on a small round table in a predominantly blue room seems to suggest late Picasso, while the seedy *Interior at Paddington*, with its cheap brocade-red glow from a lamp, might be a brothel as well as a reference to the Camden Town painters and a bow to Patrick Caufield. One of the most beautiful paintings (if that's a word that Dalwood would accept about work that remains in its fluidity and eclecticism relentlessly postmodern) is *Old Thames*. The outline of a black barge against the gray river suggests not only Whistler in its unassuming intensity but, in the repetition of the small waves, something of the mark-making of a Japanese woodcut.

Dexter Dalwood, Half Moon Street, 2014

Typically Dalwood's works depict imagined or fabricated interiors devoid of the human figure. His canvas of the Old Bailey shows the high court emptied of both the accused and the judiciary. Suggested by the recent Murdoch phone-hacking scandal, its fiery hell-furnace reds and seat like a biblical throne of judgment, seem all the more potent. Another version of the court is depicted at night in black and white. Not only does this appear to make reference to newsprint and something rather filmic and Hitchcockian but suggests, with its flat areas of impenetrable darkness, the hidden shenanigans that go on in high places. There is humor too—as in *1989*—Dalwood is not afraid to take on big and controversial subjects. Here the tail-end of a statue of a horse on a stone plinth is set against a pale London sky.

The date is the clue, for it refers to the Poll Tax riots, when miners and anarchists climbed on scaffolding and sculptures during the protests that affected British towns and cities during dissent against the poll tax (a local tax officially known as the "Community Charge") introduced by Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government. There's a certain wit and irony that the backend of a horse, a conventional 19th-century statue of a General or member of the establishment set on a pedestal high above a London street, depicts the rump of the ruling class in retreat.

Dexter Dalwood, 1989, 2014

There is a persistent loneliness and sense of alienation at the heart of Dalwood's work in these atmospheric, silent interiors devoid of human presence. They are dreamscapes; romantic, melancholic and enigmatic. Poetic intensity is continually undercut with the work's postmodern rawness and insouciance of assembly, the flat, often scruffy and casual-looking surfaces and areas of color.

Dalwood is concerned about finding meaning in lived and shared experience, a sort of social realism that creates mythical narratives though the appropriation of different viewpoints and sources of knowledge. Unusually for an artist influenced by and steeped in our transient consumerist society, he has said that "by making connections between all areas of visual culture I find that there is the possibility of presenting a worldview which prioritizes what is important, while at the same time including, or making space for the insignificant." To return to Walter Benjamin, he "seize(s) hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger." Past and present coalesce in transformative scenarios that not only question the processes of memory and our relationship to the past but continually scrutinize the power of painting to examine these themes.

All images courtesy of the Simon Lee Gallery and the artist.

Art Review
March 2015

ArtReview

Dexter Dalwood *London Paintings*

Simon Lee Gallery, London 18 November – 24 January

Dexter Dalwood earned his reputation at the end of the 1990s by painting the imagined homes and offices of celebrities. His works were fun and likeable, but his association with Charles Saatchi and Martin Maloney has been hard to shake off. Nonetheless, Dalwood's first show at Simon Lee, signalling a move from Gagosian Gallery (five years after his last show with them), sees him ditch completely the explicit references to celebrities to continue the more earnest and politically conscious mood of his paintings since the mid-2000s, here focusing on the gritty charms of his hometown of London.

This isn't the London of chichi coffee shops. Although the paintings – a mix of anonymous interiors and iconic landmarks – are dated 2013 and 2014, they seem nostalgic for a time when the city was rougher around the edges. There are two scenes from cult music venues, both still riding today on their legendary reputations. *Roundhouse* (2014), zooming in on a corner of a stage set, as if we were pushed up against it during a gig, is bathed in blood-red tones; *Heaven* (2013) depicts the exit corridor of the famous nightclub, looking into the black void of the club interior dotted with indeterminate whitish streaks – maybe people, maybe disco lights. The peculiar angles and hallucinatory vibe suggests fragments from hazy personal memories.

Four paintings depicting details of domestic interiors in different parts of the capital underscore the transient nature of bohemian London living. The evocative addresses of their titles hint at the greater cultural history of the city. Powis Square in Notting Hill, for example, was made famous as the set of the cult 1970 film *Performance*. In Dalwood's *Powis Square* (2014), there is a suggestion of a figure at the bottom of the lofty room; a Francis Baconesque play on cropping, volume and psychological intrigue. It's the only clear sign of life in any of these interiors; elsewhere, our imagination and memories must fill in the human element.

Dalwood has previously assumed the role of obsessed celebrity fan, and here he continues the game of asking us to spot pop-cultural and art-historical references that appear sometimes as quotes, at other times as familiar painting techniques or moods. London's history of painters merges here with London itself. He is clearly attracted to British Pop, as represented by the likes of Patrick Caulfield and David Hockney; also the dark, psychologically charged works of Whistler and Bacon. Two Thames scenes, *Old Thames* and *The Thames Below Waterloo* (both 2014), recall Whistler's London nocturnes and Monet's paintings of Waterloo Bridge respectively, while in the latter a patch of LA-swimming-pool-blue water – complete with the top of a pool ladder – unexpectedly references Hockney.

The mix of memory and art history means that the works defy pinning down to a particular time. *1989* (2014), the back end of the horse from the George IV statue on Trafalgar Square, is the only painting for which we are given a specific historical date to consider. The year 1989 is when the Poll Tax riots took place on Trafalgar Square, effectively marking the end of Thatcherism and a brief moment of victory for Londoners against an unwanted government policy. In Dalwood's cheeky version (he first depicted the Poll Tax protests in a 2005 painting), the horse looks a little too realistic, as if it might walk off the plinth or dump some steaming manure. It's these sparks of unexpected references, disjointed elements and punky humour that add interest to Dalwood's superficially simple work. If his celebrity interiors were always more concerned with his – and indeed our own – fantasies than with the famous people themselves, this portrait of London gives us insight into Dalwood's influences and youthful nostalgias. *Jennifer Thatcher*

Roundhouse, 2014, oil on canvas, 150 × 220 cm.
Courtesy the artist and Simon Lee Gallery, London

Phaidon
17 November 2014

PHAIDON

Dexter Dalwood's Muse Music

Dexter Dalwood is that rare beast - an artist able to examine how history is constructed and interpreted through the making of paintings which are both intellectually challenging yet visually seductive. Not only does Dexter Dalwood possess a profound cultural and historical knowledge, he also perceives the connections between art history, politics, music, literature and personal experience, which he intimates with a remarkable lightness of touch. The artist's juxtaposition of quotations and references from a broad and eclectic range of subjects is reflected in his transposition of the cut-and-paste of the collage technique to canvas. A technique he values in music but doesn't see so much of in the art of others.

You may be surprised to find that he spent his early life pacing the stage as bassist with punk band The Cortinas. "We supported the Stranglers at The Roxy and were signed by Miles Copeland (manager of The Police)," he says. "We had a mad year-and-a-half signed to CBS then it all went pear-shaped. So I went back to Central Saint Martins School of Art when I was 20, which was a little strange as I'd had a bit of a life by then!"

Powis Square (2014) - Dexter Dalwood

London, as a setting and subject matter, has recurred throughout Dalwood's career. However, his latest series of paintings (The London Paintings, on show at Simon Lee from tomorrow) present us with an entirely new and unexpected narrative through which to view a seemingly familiar city. Specific London locations or sites are reconstructed from a collage of memory, cultural and political history and subjective association.

"I don't usually play music while I'm painting but if I do the occasional night session – which I do less of now – I have a big speaker system here in the studio, there's no one else in the building so I can have it very, very loud. I do like that Mulholland Drive type phenomenal racket, having Rammstein or something like that going really loud. That results in a different kind of painting, really going for it. Playing bass has definitely coloured what I'm into. I like a stripped down track. I like Bach because it's like Cézanne – there's not a note wrong, everything is precise but, incredibly, it's so much more than that."

Dalwood's paintings reward a similar close observation. The event or situation depicted is reflected in the styles of painting that were developed during the periods referred to in the work. He not only examines and celebrates the medium of painting in terms of its history and legacy; he also demonstrates the enduring contemporary relevance of painting as a way of communicating how we experience the world in which we live.

Interior at Paddington (2014) - Dexter Dalwood

"I've often wondered why a lot of visual artists aren't able to make work that incorporates lots of different aspects of their life in the way that musicians make different kinds of music for different reasons," he says. "The musicians I'm interested in somehow manage to wrap all sorts of genres of things and push things to a different level, using all sorts of other references." You'll find Dexter's Spotify playlist below. First though, read what he says about how the songs on it impact on his art.

Ian Hunter *A Nightingale Sang in Berkeley Square* - This live version is amazing for many reasons. I love the fact that it's a genuine voice, working-class, cockney. It's a voice you would never hear on The X Factor, a voice that's been extinguished from popular culture. He makes this song his own and it makes you think about London. And when the strings come in, there's this huge great overwhelming warmth to it all.

Janet Jackson featuring Q-Tip and Joni Mitchell *Got 'Til It's Gone* - After the opening of a show in New York a while back, I went to a club called Tabletop and Q-Tip was DJing. He had so many well-known songs —

things like Talking Heads' Once In a Lifetime — and he'd speed them up and put beats on them and the whole thing would just turn into this epic juggernaut of sound. The way he's embedded this Joni Mitchell song into the track led me to the idea of quoting other paintings in my own paintings – to have at the core a previous painting of someone else's and to try to 'tamper' with them. The whole idea of sampling is so integrated into how we hear things now but visual culture is a bit behind in that way.

Lou Reed *Intro /Sweet Jane (live, from Rock n Roll Animal)* - This shows how old I am, I saw him in Bristol around this time and it was the best gig I ever saw. It was through Lou Reed and The Velvet Underground that I realized there was someone called Andy Warhol and that he had this place called The Factory in New York that was linked to artists. As a teenager I saw this as someone at the core of things that were going on and that's how my connection with art came about. When this came out it wasn't this fragile tentative sound - it was a full-on tough, clean, hard, almost glam rock sound with balls. Reed was at his most heroin-thin-blonde-cropped-hair weird. The guitar players were just epic, it was an extraordinary sound and it was so uncompromising. When he died I felt incredibly upset because for me, when I was stuck in my painting it was always, What would Lou do?

Heaven (2013) - Dexter Dalwood

Nils Frahm *Familiar* - He's a German pianist. I went to see him at the Barbican recently. He has a grand piano and these old Moog synths. He's a classically trained boy genius who turned into a crossover artist. It doesn't really fall into one genre or another. It's a cross between mad, full-on dance music and Richard Clayderman but it never gets kitsch. It's a phenomenal noise.

Chic *I Want Your Love (extended 6.55 version)* I like the song, but especially the extended version from about the 3:30 mark — it's just instrumental, it's basically the riff and strings and bass and it's just something else. Then the brass comes in, then jazz guitar, then it's just bass and guitar piano and finally, tubular bells! A song is still great when just the bass and drums are playing and everything is cream on top and they're carrying it. That's what I want in a painting. I like the idea of things being underpinned with a structure. It's one I'd definitely have on a desert island, blasting out while being attacked!


Hendrix's Last Basement (2001) - Dexter Dalwood

The Jimi Hendrix Experience *Little Wing (instrumental)* - Here's something that George Condo and I share. My step brother played along with Jimi Hendrix records. I was playing bass by 12 and I used to stumble along to Hendrix with him. The bass playing on this is off the beat, sublime —what he does is amazing. The lead guitar is a foreign country for me when you hear it raw and in a way without his voice. I read a bit about all his recording techniques. He was continually trying to push the sound of the guitar, doing things like putting it through the organ speaker to see if the sound could maybe become softer or adding glockenspiels into the backing tracks. Even in the recording studio and production it was so anarchic.

Jay-Z and Kanye West featuring Frank Ocean and Jay-Z *Made in America* - I'm interested in the way Kanye West takes music to another place via that cut-up collage thing. It's incredibly intellectually thought through, and so engaged, and involved in the process. I like this so much because of Frank Ocean's voice which sings the chorus song so mellow and beautiful but when Kanye raps "This ain't no fashion show, motherfucker, we live it" it's just so telling. It makes me think of America. I've been in LA a lot for shows and it makes me think of low rider cars turning the corner of Sunset and Vine; it's that softness of production, like hearing something under a duvet or through a wall.

Cello Suite No: 2 in D Minor, Sarabande Bach (Alexander Kniazev) The most beautiful piece of Bach ever. When I listen to it I have this synesthesia thing going on where it makes me see the colours purple and black. How that's possible I don't know. It's such a piece of European music — the sadness of it…but enjoyable sadness. That's what's peculiar about music — that when it works it can be crushingly sad but enjoyable at the same time. Apparently on hearing of the death of the baby daughter of a friend, the cellist Rostropovich flew to Tokyo, took a 1 1/2 hour cab ride to his house and played this outside for him. Then got back in the taxi and returned to the airport to fly back to Europe.

Hell Is Round The Corner *Tricky* - I think he was like Kanye West in the way that he was ahead of things. It's that 90s moment when music was in a bit of a state — when it was harder to find things you thought were interesting either with production or song structure. As I get older, and especially with the new work I'm doing it's a slower, more austere kind of project. Patience takes a long time to learn! Not to be in too much of a hurry. The way things are speeding up, I think people want things more considered. I believe we'll look back at this decade and its snippets culture, as one in which we really suffered from a lack of concentration.


The Velvets (2003) - Dexter Dalwood

Pale Blue Eyes *The Velvet Underground* -The fragility of it is like having a bad hangover on a bright spring New York morning when your hands are shaking and you're dying to have a cigarette. It's a post-drug thing. It's just so fragile.

Kunst Bulletin
29 June 2013

KUNST
BULLETIN

Fokus

Dexter Dalwood zeigt in seinen grossformatigen Bildern eine zeitgenössische Variante der Historienmalerei. Dalwood, der 2010 für den Turner Prize nominiertwar, stellt Zeitgeschichte nie abbildend, sondern indirekt dar. Imaginäre Innenund Aussenräume verweisen mit vielen visuellen Details auf bekannte Persönlichkeiten und Geschehnisse. Zitate aus Kunst, Mode, Werbung verbindet Dalwood zu Assoziationsgeflechten, die einen ganzen Zeitgeist einfangen. Das Centre Pasquart in Biel präsentiert Dalwood erstmals in einer institutionellen Einzelschau in der Schweiz.

Dexter Dalwood - Imaginierte Zeitgeschichte

Von: Alice Henkes

links: Hendrix's Last Basement, 2001, Ölfarbe auf Leinwand, 203x183 cm, Zabludowicz Collection
rechts: Brighton Bomb, 2006, Ölfarbe auf Leinwand, 200x160 cm, Private Collection

«Ich teile mit, dass ich eines schönen Vormittags, ich weiss nicht mehr genau um wie viel Uhr, da mich die Lust, einen Spaziergang zu machen, ankam, den Hut auf den Kopf setzte, das Schreib- oder Geisterzimmer verliess, die Treppe hinunterlief, um auf die Strasse zu eilen.» So hebt Robert Walsers berühmte, 1916 entstandene Erzählung ‹Der Spaziergang› an. Und wenig später jubelt der Dichter: «Die morgendliche Welt, die sich vor meinen Augen ausbreitete, erschien mir so schön, als sähe ich sie zum ersten Mal.» Auch in der Landschaft, die Dexter Dalwood unter dem Titel ‹Robert Walser›, 2012, anbietet, lässt sich viel Schönes entdecken. Am oberen Bildrand ist eine Berglandschaft aus John Bunyans ‹Pilgrim's Progress› von 1678 zu sehen. Den Grossteil der Leinwand bedeckt eine dörfliche Szene. Ein heller Weg, der am unteren Bildrand beginnt, führt zu einem Häuflein dicht aneinander gedrängter Häuser. Ein Hauch von südlicher Wärme und sommerlicher Frische scheint über dem Bild zu liegen, das deutlich an Cézanne erinnert, allerdings weniger an ein bestimmtes seiner Bilder als an den leichten, offenen Pinselduktus des südfranzösischen Modernen. Nur ein wichtiges Kompositionsteilchen fehlt: die Farbe. Denkt man bei der Kombination aus Landschaft und Robert Walser an dichterische Spaziergänge, so bezieht sich Dalwood auch auf Walsers ‹Cézannegedanken›, einen Essay, der 1929 veröffentlicht wurde. Möglicherweise hat Walser die grosse Cézanne- Ausstellung besucht, die der Galerist Paul Cassirer im Winter 1909 in Berlin veranstaltet hat, und wurde so zu seiner dichterischen Auseinandersetzung mit dem Maler angeregt. Doch was, wenn Walser sein Bildgedächtnis auffrischen wollte? Dann standen ihm Reproduktionen in Büchern zur Verfügung. Reproduktionen, die in den Zwanzigerjahren nur in Schwarz-Weiss möglich waren. Dalwood hat all diese Details durchdacht und in seinem eigens für die Bieler Ausstellung entstandenen Bild zu einer tiefgründigen Reflexion über Kunst und Dichtung, ideale Landschaften und geistige Spaziergänge und das Verhältnis von Bild und Abbild verbunden.

Assoziative Bildräume

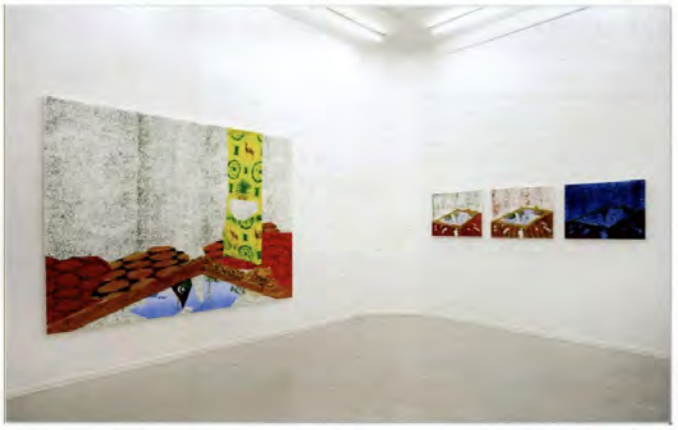
Dalwood schätzt es, sich Orte zu erschliessen, indem er sich malend und denkend in sie vertieft. Mit ‹Robert Walser› bietet der britische Künstler einen attraktiven Schlüssel zu seiner Arbeit, die Felicity Lunn, Direktorin des Centre Pasquart und Kuratorin der Ausstellung, als eine Art «zeitgenössischer Historienmalerei» beschreibt: «Sein Malstil und seine Themen sind in der zeitgenössischen Kunst einmalig. Es gibt sehr wenige Künstler/innen, die Historienmalerei betreiben, die Verknüpfungen zwischen unterschiedlichen Epochen, aber auch zwischen der Vergangenheit und der Gegenwart erfolgreich herstellen. In fast jedem Bild haben die verschiedenen Verweise und Zitate gemeinsam, dass sie aus der gleichen Epoche stammen.»
Dalwood beschäftigt sich mit historischen Persönlichkeiten und Ereignissen und reflektiert politische Themen in einer für die gegenwärtige Kunst ungewöhnlich tiefgehenden Weise. Seine Themen setzt er dabei nicht abbildend, sondern imaginierend um. Er nutzt eine Art Collageverfahren: Er zitiert aus Kunst, Popkultur, Mode und baut so assoziative Bildräume auf, die eine Art Zeitgeist-Porträt bilden. Im Bild ‹Brighton Bomb›, 2006, das auf den Anschlag der IRA 1984 auf Margaret Thatcher verweist, kombiniert er einen Blick auf die See und den Pier mit schroffen Farbflächen, die sowohl auf den Mitte der Achtzigerjahre stark rezipierten Künstler Jean-Michel Basquiat wie auch auf die bevorzugten Modefarben jener Zeit verweisen. In ‹Hendrix's Last Basement›, 2001, einer fiktiven Darstellung des Hotelzimmers, in dem Jimi Hendrix 1970 starb, erinnert der Boden, der zum Bildrand hin auszulaufen scheint, an um 1960 entstandene Bilder des amerikanischen Farbfeldmalers Morris Louis; die Bettdecke, die Tapeten, das Poster an der Wand wiederum an die Lust an psychedelischen Bildern und an die auffälligen Muster der Mode der Siebzigerjahre.

Enttäuschende Realität

Sehr gebildet und belesen, verbindet Dalwood Figuren und Motive aus Kultur, Politik, Prominenz und Wirtschaft zu komplexen Motivgeweben. Felicity Lunn schätzt an ihm auch, dass sich in seiner Arbeit ein intellektueller Hintergrund mit einer spürbaren Lust am Malen und einer durch die Pop Art beeinflussten Palette verbinden, das wirke «zugleich intellektuell und lustvoll, es regt zum Denken an und ist dabei auch unterhaltsam», sagt sie. Für Dalwood selbst steht das Malen im Zentrum seines Schaffens. «Was mich am meisten interessiert ist, wie ich ein Bild malen kann, das uns etwas über unsere Welt sagen kann.» Wobei das, was der Künstler in seinen Bildern mitzuteilen wünscht, auch den unsichtbaren Teil der Welt umfasst. Jenes Bild, das man sich im Innern von einem Vorgang macht. Die wie Mosaiken aus unterschiedlichen Motiven und Motivteilen zusammengestellten Arbeiten Dalwoods stellen nicht nur komplexe Reflexionen einer Zeit dar, sie beschäftigen sich auch mit der Frage, wie durch äussere Reize innere Bilder entstehen, die manchmal bedeutsamer sind als reale Abbilder. Das älteste Bild der Ausstellung zeigt ‹Montaigne's Room›, 1997. Dieses Bild markiert den Beginn von Dalwoods Auseinandersetzung mit Räumen, die durch besondere Ereignisse, besondere Bewohner/innen eine über den Augenblick hinausweisende Bedeutung erlangt haben. In ‹Montaigne's Room› allerdings scheint nichts von Bedeutung zu sprechen. Es ist ein auffallend blasses, kaltes und fahles Bild. Ein Bild, das von Ernüchterung spricht, von jener Enttäuschung, die Dexter Dalwood empfand, als er auf einer Reise durchs Périgord das Schloss besuchte, in dem Michel de Montaigne seine berühmten Essays verfasste. Vermutlich hatte er so etwas wie ein poetisch überhöhtes «Schreib- und Geisterzimmer» erwartet, das Walser im oben genannten Zitat beschreibt. Doch alles was sich ihm bot, war ein ganz normales Zimmer. «Die Realität war enttäuschend im Vergleich mit der Imagination», erzählt Dalwood, und er vergleicht sein Erlebnis mit dem eines Kinogängers, der die Verfilmung eines geliebten Romans sieht und auf der Leinwand nichts von dem wiederfindet, was ihn beim Lesen beglückte. Seither richtet er aus Zeitzitaten imaginäre Räume ein, wie das Hotelzimmer, in dem Jimi Hendrix starb, Jackie Onassis' Gemach auf der Yacht Christina oder das Waldstück am Kleinen Wannsee bei Berlin, in dem Heinrich von Kleist sein Leben beendete. Bilder, die gar nicht den Anspruch erheben, dokumentarischer Natur zu sein und dabei eine Fülle von Gedanken, Ideen und Anregungen transportieren.

Frieze
September 2012

FRIEZE



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DEXTER DALWOOD
David Risley Gallery
Copenhagen

Dexter Dalwood's work has never been about knowing something intimately, but rather envisaging and relying upon the viewer's prior knowledge to create an image of a place. The British artist imagines interiors and scenes of infamous events described in the press but not revealed in photographs, such as the scene of the *Death of David Kelly* (2008), part of his contribution to the Turner Prize in 2010. Instead, Dalwood typically starts with a collage as a working model, so his source materials are actually the fragmented ideas of what these locales might look like in our collective imagination.

In the artist's second solo exhibition at David Risley Gallery – suggestively titled 'Orientalism' – his take was slightly different. Though the works here also depict imagined spaces, gone are the cinematic interiors and eerie connotations of the particular events or secluded places of his earlier paintings. Time and place seem to be obliterated, and despite the broken compositions, the works almost border on still lives.

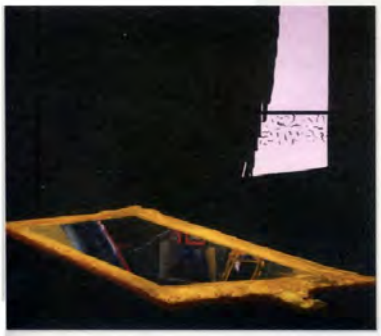
Dalwood created the seven paintings with the small gallery space in mind. Their backgrounds are made up of what look like etching marks, doubling as white noise out of which images emerge – bits of architecture, interiors and mirrors in which reflections appear. The paintings also shared some recognizable motifs: namely, palm trees and coloured flags that allude to current events in the Middle East. Dalwood's characteristic flatness of colour and smoothness of image surface are there, but in relation to his previous works, which dealt with discrete subjects, this collection is a sequential variation on a theme; first, the largest canvas, *Next Day* (all works 2012), established the motif. Against the speckled, stucco-like background, Dalwood collages swaths of painted terracotta floor tiles, an unravelled tapestry with a camel print, and a gilded frame bearing a reflection of palm trees, minarets and a half-familiar green, black and red flag with a crescent and a star. A triptych of identical compositions followed: mirrors reflecting images of minarets and palm trees, shifting in colour according to time (*Morning*, *Midday*, *Night*). The fifth work, *Snake Charmer*, is ostensibly a reference to Jean Léone Gérôme's arch late-19th-century example of Orientalist painting. Here, an image emerges more fully – a sandy surface, blue sky and a minaret. *Night Mirror* is effectively the series' end: the work shows a window opening into the blackened surface; the mirror on the floor presents an indistinct reflection. The series goes out on a note of obscurity.

Individual titles are usually crucial to understanding Dalwood's subject matter, yet this time the title of the exhibition itself set the tone. The term 'Orientalism' today might conjure bleak media images of army khakis against sand and remnants of car bombs in dusty cities. Here, Dalwood hinted at less violent tropes that never fully materialized. The group of paintings are more tentative than resolute, but that also lends them a certain fluidity. As in all his work, the narrative lies outside the picture frame, but in this case the narrative is a much broader, looser one, encompassing pictorial traditions, contemporary geopolitics and questions of representation and looking. It's difficult to imagine these paintings apart from each other – and I'm not sure that would do them a service – but there is also something thoroughly satisfying about watching Dalwood play out a theme. For all the lack of impasto brushstrokes or emphasis on medium, it is ultimately the process of seeing and perceiving that is on display in Dalwood's compositions – alluding to snippets of media images but not quite painting the full picture.

CHRISTINE ANTAYA

4
Dexter Dalwood
'Orientalism', 2012,
installation view

5
Dexter Dalwood
Night Mirror, 2012,
oil on canvas,
92 × 100 cm



Artforum
April 2010

ARTFORUM

ST. IVES, UK

Dexter Dalwood

TATE ST IVES

This midcareer survey of paintings and collages by Dexter Dalwood provides a full picture of his work since 1997 and confirms his reputation as one of the most interesting and engaging painters at work today. The display was curated by Martin Clark (the director of Tate St Ives) and shows the persistence with which Dalwood has pursued the twin themes central to his work: painterly quotation and psychologically charged scenes linked to famous historical figures and events.

Dexter Dalwood, *Manderley*, 2009, oil on canvas, 78¾ x 98½".

Two small paintings near the entrance of the exhibition, both made in 1997, show the dual origins of Dalwood's work in the high and low of literature and popular culture. *Montaigne's Room* shows a bare living space, lightly painted on a white ground; *Bridge of the Enterprise* is equally minimal, a few shapes and a star-filled window evoking the famous set of *Star Trek*. The subsequent paintings are larger and more intricately composed and develop Dalwood's use of citation and pastiche. *Sharon Tate's House*, 1998, and *Neverland*, 1999, are both derived from written descriptions—in the case of the former, Vincent Bugliosi and Curt Gentry's famous account of the Manson Family murders, *Helter Skelter* (1974). For these, as with all paintings since, Dalwood first made small preparatory collages, a fine selection of which is also on display. It was in making these collages that Dalwood began to use reproductions of paintings, such as the section taken from Morris Louis in *Hendrix's Last Basement*, 2001. An unspoken relation is conjured between the historic or biographical subject matter and the pastiche of painterly styles. The effect is to render history poetic, and the poetry of artistic style historical; Dalwood's paintings happen where these two opposing vectors glance off each other. Yet despite the cunning with which Dalwood plots his work, there is no sense in which a key is required for decipherment (in contrast to R. B. Kitaj's painting). With Dalwood it is the evocative power of the image and the delight of its design that count.

In works such as *Burroughs in Tangiers*, 2005, the design strikes a delicate balance between a Matissean decorative surface construction and a Rauschenberg-like interior narrative. The same might be said of *Herman Melville*, 2005, which combines elements from Picasso's analytic Cubism and a painting by Georg Baselitz. The interlocking of art and history is more direct in paintings with a political-historical referent, such as *Yalta*, 2006, showing the Livadia Palace, where the Yalta Conference was held, overlaid with a Picasso and suggestive of the cultural cold war to come. Yet the notion that these are contemporary history paintings, as is so often claimed, is inadequate. *The Death of David Kelly*, 2008, showing a tree (derived from a painting by Lucas Cranach) against an Yves Klein–blue background, only obliquely alludes to the case of the British military expert who allegedly committed suicide after testifying before Parliament about claims that Iraq was in possession of weapons of mass destruction. This is important contemporary history (and has also been treated by Richard Hamilton in his recent "Medal of Dishonor," *The Hutton Award*, 2008), but the painting hardly functions in the public-consciousness-building manner of history painting, as it is traditionally understood, reflecting rather the opacity and complexity of contemporary historical events and the mediating power of images.

—*John-Paul Stonard*