

***Oh To Be a Painting***  
***Curated by Katelyn Ledford***

**August 10 – September 13, 2020**

**Online Exclusive**

**Available Artwork:** <https://bit.ly/2XCeXNi>

Abigail Ogilvy Gallery is proud to present *Oh To Be a Painting*, featuring the artwork of Hangama Amiri, Destiny Belgrave, Sean Downey, Ada Goldfeld, David Heo, Nicolas Holiber, Joshua Jefferson, Erin Loree, Sean McGaughey, Kiernan Pazdar, Madeline Peckenpaugh, and Samuel Weinberg. Our third online-exclusive exhibition, guest curated by Katelyn Ledford.

From the curator, Katelyn Ledford:

We didn't need a pandemic to make us realize we view a great deal of art online. While the accessibility in doing so is extremely important and necessary, painters are constantly wondering, "Is it enough to view my work only online?"

Oh To Be a Painting addresses this question through 12 artists whose work begs the viewer to touch and feel them through the screen. Each artist's unique handling of materials instills a longing to see them in person instead of zooming in on a compressed JPG. Subject matter and themes vary from portraiture to improvisation yet all offer a juiciness for the eye to feast upon. While these paintings exist strikingly as flattened images, they lose an integral part of being a painting, the ability to immerse the viewer. Artists are supreme adapters, ever evolving with their circumstances, but how do painters adapt their work to a virtual art world (or even should they)? I, as a painter, do not know. However, I do know that I wish I could see these paintings in person.

About the artists:

**Hangama Amiri**, as an Afghan refugee woman, produces textile works that evoke her personal diaspora as a means to investigate the politics of gender in Islamic culture, while also celebrating feminine subjects that have been deemed taboo. Her work begins by culling fabrics from stores in New York, which are imported from markets in India and bazaars in Afghanistan. She then cuts and stitches together various textiles, fabrics, and clothing into visually seductive compositions as a way of celebrating Afghan women's feminism and identities in visual art. The act of sewing these different sources together in her work becomes a metaphor for uniting

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fragmented identities that have had to live in multiple geographies around the world. In these fabric installations, Amiri chooses to not only forefront women-dominated spaces, such as beauty parlors, but also subversive depictions of items banned by the Taliban, such as red lipstick, shiny fabrics, and nail polish. The artist uses these symbols to give Afghan women a sense of freedom and power in their own sensuality, sexuality, desire, and pleasure; this is in contrast to the Islamic norms of women's bodies being something very private, secret, and hidden behind a veil.

Hangama Amiri (b. 1989 Peshawar, Pakistan) received her BFA (Major in Fine Arts) from NSCAD University in Halifax NS (2012) and her MFA in Painting and Printmaking from Yale School of Art, New Haven, CT (2020). She was a Canadian Fulbright and Post-Graduate Fellow at Yale University School of Art and Sciences in New Haven, CT (2015-2016). She has exhibited her paintings nationally and internationally, recently in New York, Toronto, France, Italy, London (UK), and Sofia, Bulgaria. She won the 2003 Portia White Protégé Award, and in 2015, her painting *Island of Dreams* won a runner-up honorable mention at RBC Canadian Painting Competition.

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**Destiny Belgrave** was born and raised in Brooklyn NY and nurtured, with a Caribbean and African American upbringing. Currently she is based out of Queens, NY where she lives and works. She graduated from the Maryland Institute College of Art in 2018 with a BFA. She is a current fellow of the A.I.R Fellowship Program and a current resident of the BRIC workspace Studio Residency and the BRIClab Residency. Belgrave was also a recent breakout star at SPRING/BREAK art show in NY, where she showed a solo show of recent works. Her work upholds and uplifts Blackness, family, and culture, along with domestic and familial activities, spaces, and objects. The works are often mixed media pieces but they almost always use papercuts as the primary medium.

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**Sean Downey's** work considers our relationship to screens, and the screen's relationship to, and origins in, painting. Images have always been, in part, an attempt to crush space and time and to lure viewers into an Orphic journey, or down a click hole. Much of the artist's recent work is sourced from spaces built in virtual reality. He collages disparate forms, subjects, and images and then processes these sources through a very handmade approach to painting. VR spaces are treated as a still life or landscape that can be returned to repeatedly throughout the process, adjusted, and mined for visual information to serve the needs of the analog painting process. The confusion and distortion of source imagery has also become a way to keep his

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approach and response hovering in an abstract space even as the images remain for the most part recognizable. This in-between state seems to mirror Downey's own experience, as a consciousness attempting to sift through and make sense out of a nonstop onslaught of thoughts, memories, and experiences.

Sean Downey received his BFA from the Kansas City Art Institute and his MFA from Boston University. He has had recent solo exhibitions at Steven Zevitas Gallery (Boston, MA) and LaMontagne Gallery (Boston, MA), and has been included in recent group exhibitions at Richard Heller Gallery (Santa Monica, CA), the Institute of Contemporary Art at MECA (Portland, ME), the Leroy Neiman Gallery at Columbia University (New York, NY), LaMontagne Gallery (Boston, MA), and Park Place Gallery (Brooklyn, NY). Downey is a founding member of the curatorial collaborative\_kijidome, winner of the 2015 James and Audrey Foster Prize from the Institute of Contemporary Art, Boston. His work has been profiled in recent editions of Art Maze Magazine, New American Paintings, Maake Magazine, and the I Like Your Work Podcast. He currently lives and works in Fairfield, IA, where he is an Associate Professor of Art at Maharishi International University.

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**Ada Goldfeld's** work explores quiet, everyday moments that are emotionally and often politically charged. In her studio, she spends time with the objects, people, and spaces she paints, discovering the textures, patterns, and atmospheric conditions that point to the underlying significance of the subject matter. Through this careful observation, she aims to make paintings that sting you with believability, as if to declare: this is what this experience was like, and now you have no choice but to see it. Now you have no choice but to feel it.

Most recently, Goldfeld has considered how the pandemic has reshaped her life in New York City. While quarantined in a cramped studio apartment, she has faced a stillness that she notes "is foreign to me." Goldfeld has watched as chairs remain untouched for weeks, shirts accumulate dust, and magnets slip off her mini-fridge. One day bleeds into the next, each steeped with a sense of helplessness. Through drawing, the artist has recorded this passage of time.

Ada Goldfeld currently lives and works in New York City. She graduated from the dual-degree program between the School of the Museum of Fine Arts and Tufts University, receiving a BFA in studio art and a BA in art history and religion. In 2018, she completed an MFA in painting at the Rhode Island School of Design. Alongside her studio practice, Goldfeld is an avid teacher, instructing college and extracurricular art classes in the tri-state area.

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**David Heo's** artwork *Exerting Agency* was made to present a toxic dynamic he had recently witnessed. "It's unfortunate because it's this awful power dynamic that keeps perpetuating over and over again. I know everyone knows what I'm referring to. We've all experienced this unaddressed imbalance at some point, whether it's an intimate moment, a group hang, or within a professional platform. I hate seeing this. NOBODY should feel like they can't exert their agency because of the fear, anxiety, or consequences that quietly looms."

David Heo (B. 1992, Georgia) is a Chicago-based artist. He received his Master of Fine Arts in Painting and Drawing from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In recent works, Heo commonly utilizes history, to illustrate a range of folklore from grand, mythic metanarratives to quiet frames of daily life. Heo renders the traditional into the contemporary as he processes his personal experiences at the moment. By using the symbology classic to historical paintings and illustrations of mythology and folklore—the horse, the tiger, the dog—Heo typologies the people he meets and interactions during nights out. Heo's work has been exhibited internationally and featured in various publications.

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**Nicolas Holiber** is a Brooklyn-based artist known for his large-scale public works and mixed media paintings. His work is a celebration of materials and color, and his process finds inspiration in the seemingly endless act of deconstruction and reconstruction. His most recent public installation, *Nicolas Holiber: Birds on Broadway*, features ten oversized wooden sculptures of climate-endangered birds that are placed along Broadway from 64-157<sup>th</sup> Streets in NYC. Holiber has been the recipient of several awards and honors including residency at Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Process Space on Governors Island, ArtInPlace Public Sculpture Award in Virginia, Visiting Artist-in-Residence at West Nottingham Academy in Maryland, a Postgraduate Fellowship at the New York Academy of Art, and residency at the Leipzig International Art Programme in Germany.

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Through painting, **Erin Loree** explores themes of transformation, inversion, and duality, with an emphasis on the process as a journey of discovery. She works without references or a plan and engages in a dialogue with the work, allowing each mark to reveal the next while flirting with the edges of abstraction and representation. Working wet-into-wet, the artist builds up thick sections of paint using a variety of conventional and unconventional tools, and then removes and reapplies the material to create richly-layered surfaces that evoke emotional states and psychic spaces.

“My process a material and symbolic renewal of matter, form, energy, and meaning. I allow the work to continuously changes states as globs of paint move around the surface, dragging, shifting, and relocating, in search of their final destination. The images appear to have lived before settling down, unfolding out of themselves, in accordance to their own inner logic. The work does not follow prescribed formulae of conventional painting, but instead continuously tests and expands the possibilities by which a painting can occur and be experienced.

Drawing inspiration from the cycles of birth, death, growth and decay in natural world, my work reflects the notion that everything outside of us and within us is in a constant state of becoming and transitioning. Forms appear melt and morph into one another, making it difficult to tell where one ends, and another begins. The movements are cyclical, and the images, regenerative. Each painting conveys a vivid expression of energy and motion captured in time, where radiant light seems to emerge from within.”

Toronto-based artist Erin Loree received a BFA from OCAD University in 2012 and a Certificate of Advanced Visual Studies from OCAD’s Florence Program. She was awarded the 2012 Medal for Drawing and Painting upon graduating from the OCAD, as well as the Nora E. Vaughan Award, and an Ontario Arts Council grant. She has participated in numerous group shows including Kim Dorland-curated *I ♥ Paint 2* at Angell Gallery in Toronto, *Younger Than George: 12 Painters in their 20s and 30s* at George Lawson Gallery in San Francisco, and *‘O Canada’* at Beers in London, UK. Recent solo exhibitions include a museum exhibition at the Tom Thomson Art Gallery in Owen Sound, Ontario, *Forth and Back* at Peter Robertson Gallery in Edmonton, Alberta, and *Snakes and Ladders* at Angell Gallery in Toronto. In the fall of 2016, she completed the Bill and Isabel Pope Residency in painting at NSCAD University in Halifax. Other residencies include Artscape Youngplace in Toronto and Sachaqa Centro de Arte in the Peruvian Amazon Jungle. Loree’s work has been featured in MOMUS, the Toronto Star, CBC Arts, Beautiful Decay and the Huffington Post. She is represented by Peter Robertson Gallery in Edmonton, Canada.

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**Josh Jefferson** has made visual art seriously since the late 1990’s with a singular drive that combines material experimentation and visual simplicity, comics, collage and a fetish for the lush verso of antiquated source material; a tactile, albeit intellectual result of his fondness for the past. He is as unafraid of forging a face from 3 strokes of brush, pen and ink splatter as he is of layering a dozen disparately drawn discards into a harmonious whole. Jefferson doesn’t seem to concern himself with end results, but the laboratory’s immediacy is his prevailing enchantment. He makes marks with learned abandon; he erases them with naiveté and concision. His practical approach is alternately reverent and iconoclastic, whether rubbing

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frottage over vinyl lettering, painting with a broad brush or concentrated draftsmanship, his work is a celebration of abandon and control.” --Scott Zieher

Joshua Jefferson has been the focus of numerous articles, including a full feature in the April 2016 issue of Juxtapoz. This year he received the highest level of Artist Fellowship from the Massachusetts Cultural Council in Painting. Recent exhibitions include one-man shows at Zevitas Marcus in Los Angeles, Gallery 16 in San Francisco, and TURN Gallery in New York City, as well as group exhibitions at Zieher Smith in New York City and Zevitas Marcus in Los Angeles.

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**Sean P McGaughey’s** paintings are indebted to the history of painting and pull from the vast history of image culture. His canvases built from a repetition of lines and forms pushing, pulling and confronting each other, while his sense of color works to subvert the action. A narrative built up from the action of lines and forms begin to dissolve, opening up a subconscious space for the viewer to insert themselves.

Sean P McGaughey current lives and works in Los Angeles, CA.

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**Kiernan Pazdar** made the painting *Dark Place* while mercury was in retrograde, the United States was amidst a global pandemic, and protestors took to the streets to work to eradicate racial injustice. No tiny samples from makeup companies, joints, alcohol, or clothing could help achieve equality and yet July’s SALE SALE SALE emails and flashing liquor store signs continued to promise help. Pazdar exists in a reality that is fraught with contradictions and cruel optimism. In her series *Smoke and Mirrors*, the artist has been using paint as a tool to help examine the tension produced by postfeminist aesthetics and neoliberalism in the United States. She is interested in common ways of coping with the anxiety of an American Dream which feels increasingly unsatisfying and impossible.

“My time working as a textile designer in my early Twenties informs everything that I do. I look for hegemonic desires in imagery found in lifestyle magazines, Pinterest, in television. Historical and trendy textiles to help bring symbolism into the work. Like the Pictures Generation and Pop Artists, I am continually thinking about the ways our ideas of normalcy are manufactured and disseminated.”

Kiernan Pazdar (b.1992, Glastonbury, CT) lives in Providence, RI and works in Warren, RI. Her work has been exhibited with the 1969 Gallery, New York, NY; Field Projects, New York, NY; The Wassaic Project, Wassaic, NY; NHA1 Sharon Art Center, Peterborough, NH; The Atwater Gallery,

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Kingston, NY ;The RISD Museum, Providence, RI; and Woods Gerry Gallery, Providence, RI. Her work is also included in the permanent collection of the Rhode Island School Of Design Museum and the Smithsonian Museum of American History. Pazdar earned her BFA in Textile Design from the Rhode Island School Of Design in 2014, and received her MFA in Painting at the same institution in 2020.

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**Madeline Peckenpaugh's** paintings mimic interconnected patterns, light, atmosphere, and pressure found in natural and urban environments. Peckenpaugh explores these formal elements through her photography practice, which she sees as a cataloging of events or situations that she can draw upon. "The matter of factness of my photographs and their peculiarity in relation to their subject sets up an obstacle for me to work through in my paintings. Through the process of painting, I transform these cropped realities into their own particular environments. I am interested in collapsing space as well as opening up deep dimensional sections; disrupting with gesture and weaving in material changes to dodge initial expectations."

Madeline Peckenpaugh received an MFA in Painting from the Rhode Island School of Design, and a BFA from the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. She has recently exhibited at 1969 Gallery (NYC), Avery Galleries (PA), Woods Gerry Gallery (RI), and Palace of Fine Arts (CA). Her artworks is held in notable public collections, including Brown University, Woodmere Art Museum, and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Her work was featured in *Create! Magazine* in 2020.

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**Samual Weinberg's** series of paintings feature a series of variations on a single recurring character called the Pink Man/ Pink Men. They are cartoonishly rendered fleshy beings that are wide-eyed, like children, seemingly amazed by whatever befalls them; mischievously engaging in any number of contests, past-times and interactions that draw equally from art historical, television, and film references. The Pink Men's stories are often influenced by archetypal sources, from school-age juvenile delinquency narratives and cult movies to urban legends and Internet forums, alternately focusing on the mundane or pedestrian moments in their world and adding to a larger ongoing narrative. This structure recalls the Sci-Fi television show, the X-Files, which would move forward with the central lines of the narrative, but often gave way to a "monster of the week" episode, each of which would stand alone but not apart. Taken as a whole, the series of paintings suggest an imagined world that seems at once familiar and a little off-kilter, where events continue to escalate towards ominous and uncertain ends.

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The world the Pink Men inhabit is one that Weinberg assembles from the constant mining of sources at hand. To create these narratives, he begins by culling images from personal photos, art historical texts, screenshots from films or television programs he's seen, and the millions of images that can be instantly conjured from a Google Image Search. A screenshot of a scene from a prestige cable television program may end up playing host to a Pink Man— matching the light and forms until he is indeed there— or unremarkable underwater photographs from an acquaintances' vacation on Instagram may set the Pink Men in that same setting— adding to the ubiquitous nature of their exploits. "In my paintings, time and space are disjointed and relationships are tentative, as the Pink Men live in their own world only through the images of ours, they are at once a peculiar stranger, but also, they are us. Like an animator whose work passes through the Uncanny Valley between hyper-realism and horror, I am placing the Pink Men in contexts that provoke both anxiety and laughter in equal measures."

As these uncertain narratives unfold, viewers are left unsure who or what to trust, and unsure who their protagonist is. Indeed, humor tempers the discomfort these suspicious subjects might provoke, and creates levity as viewers try to make connections between the familiar landscapes of their own lived experiences, the historic references that surround them online and in the world, and the outlandish suggestions of greater narratives that unfold in fantastical realms. The Pink Man paintings are built from, and so also reflect, the often incoherent, collective noise of our hyper-culture, as well as suggest a weirder world that may lie just behind it.