

Tina Gillen



La Biennale di Venezia

59. Esposizione
Internazionale
d'Arte

Partecipazioni Nazionali

Faraway

Press kit

So Close

Tina Gillen

Faraway

PRESS RELEASE

19.04.2022

Tina Gillen (b. 1972, Luxembourg) represents the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg at the 59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia with *Faraway So Close*. The exhibition, for which the artist has produced a new series of large-scale works, takes the form of an expansive painterly installation in the Luxembourg Pavilion, located within the historic premises of the Sale d'Armi in Venice's Arsenale. In *Faraway So Close*, Gillen directs her attention to the connections between the interior space and the outside world.

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Concerned primarily with the medium of painting, the work of Tina Gillen (b. 1972, Luxembourg) examines how we relate to the world around us, namely through the themes of landscape and dwelling. Her paintings often originate in photographic images that she modifies, simplifies, pictorially 'translates', and pairs with other elements to arrive at compositions that purposefully nurture a certain ambiguity, somewhere between abstraction and figuration, construction and improvisation, the surface of the canvas and the translation of a space. They often depict dense, obscure atmospheres that envelop forms culled from everyday life, so that they appear veiled with mystery and strangeness.

Tina Gillen's project for the Luxembourg Pavilion, *Faraway So Close*, was designed in response to the Sale d'Armi site, which has a history dating back to the fifteenth century, and to its past use as a storage space connected to Venetian military history. 'Rather than opting for a scenography in the traditional sense – building an architectural structure, temporary walls –' Gillen responded by working 'with the space'.

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The exhibition brings together eight large-scale paintings in a scenographic treatment inspired by painted film backdrops ‘as if [the paintings] were only there temporarily, waiting to be moved and rearranged again ... like a set still under production.’ In this way, *Faraway So Close* is an extension of Tina Gillen’s reflections on how painting relates to space, reflections which have driven her work for the last decade. Working in a way that is familiar from the artist’s previous exhibitions, the way the work is presented becomes an integral part of the work and a starting point for an aesthetic experience that is extended to the whole space.

The subjects of the paintings reflect Gillen’s recent research on natural phenomena that elude human control such as meteorological events, rising sea levels and volcanic activity. Collectively, the paintings evoke the four elements that were historically associated with the constitution of the universe (earth, water, fire and air), as well as the manifestations of disruptions brought about by human activity. They echo what the French writer Marielle Macé describes as ‘uncertain landscapes’ in literature. ‘Living in a damaged world means living in fundamentally uncertain landscapes, mazes of life lines and death lines. It means living with garbage, ghosts, hybrid beings, poison and danger, but also dreams, desires, inventions, thriving practices, because “life is always inventing”’, Macé writes.

Many of the paintings in the exhibition echo this ambivalence. For instance, in the monumentally sized *Sunshine III* (2022), a set of black and yellow schematic shapes spread across the canvas space, emerging from a nucleus located at the bottom. It evokes the sun and the rays that emanate from it but can also be read as an explosion blasting through the exhibition space. Meanwhile, *Power II* (2022) combines a network of lines and thin stripes that look like the outline

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of an electrical tower and an atmospheric background that suggests a distant horizon. Finally, three paintings sharing the same title, *Sealevel (IV, V and VI, 2022)*, reflect the contemporary challenges caused by climate change.

At the heart of the installation is a sculptural component titled *Rifugio (2022)*, whose shape was inspired by a seaside bungalow the artist discovered on the Côte d'Opale in northern France and painted in a previous work on paper entitled *Shelter (2018)*. In this composition the house is presented floating in an abstract, ethereal space, 'as if its whole environment had been erased, washed away by the water.' This interpretation places the same subject within the exhibition space and in relation to the paintings, the form becoming a polysemic space that acts both as a place for withdrawal and a gateway into the world; as a shelter and as a space beset by an abundance of information. *Faraway So Close* speaks to the complexity of the relationships that exist between interior spaces and the outside world, between proximity and distance.

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BIOGRAPHY

Tina Gillen (b. 1972, Luxembourg) has held solo exhibitions at Bozar, Brussels (2015), Mudam Luxembourg (2012), M-Museum, Leuven (2010). She has also participated in numerous group exhibitions, including at Mudam Luxembourg (2018, 2010, 2009), Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Berlin (2012), Mu.ZEE, Ostend (2010), Wiels, Brussels (2009), M HKA, Antwerp (2007), and Platform Garanti, Istanbul (2004). Her work has been the subject of two monographic publications, *Echo* (MER. Paper Kunsthalle, 2016) and *Necessary Journey* (Hatje Cantz, 2009). She lives and works in Brussels.

THE JURY

The project *Faraway So Close* by Tina Gillen was selected as part of a call for applications launched by the Ministry of Culture in partnership with Mudam. The jury was composed of Suzanne Cotter (Director of Mudam from 2018 to 2021, president of the jury), Kevin Muhlen (Director of Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain), Anke Reitz (Curator of the Steichen Collections – CNA, Clervaux), Dirk Snauwaert (Director of Wiels, Brussels), Lorenzo Benedetti (Curator at Kunstmuseum St.Gallen), Michelle Cotton (Head of Artistic Programmes and Content at Mudam) and Christophe Gallois (Curator, Head of Exhibitions at Mudam).

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PUBLICATION

The exhibition is accompanied by a catalogue with previously unpublished contributions by Jean-Philippe Antoine, Marielle Macé and Eva Wittocx, and a major conversation between Tina Gillen and Christophe Gallois, curator of the exhibition.

Texts: Jean-Philippe Antoine, Christophe Gallois, Marielle Macé, Eva Wittocx

Editor: Christophe Gallois

Graphic design: Kim Beirnaert

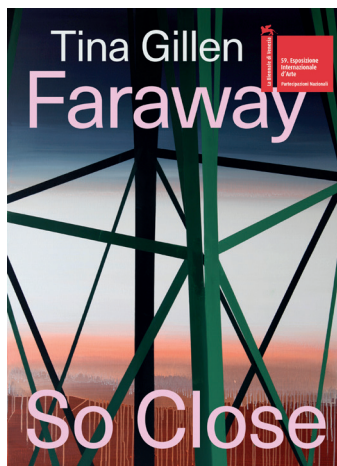
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RESEARCH PROJECT

Resonating with the theme of the exhibition, Tina Gillen, Christophe Gallois and a group of students and young artists are conducting a long-term research project at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp. Entitled “Forms of Life”, it takes shape, among others, as a monthly seminar at the Academy and a workshop in Venice at the start of September 2022.

Dwelling in the world (...) is tantamount to the ongoing, temporal interweaving of our lives with one another and with the constituents of our environment.

Tim Ingold, “On Weaving a Basket”

“Forms of Life” explores the multiple resonances of a question animating all fields of contemporary creation, thought, and society: that of our relation to other forms of life, and the ways in which we inhabit the world. Our aim is to question the links that weave together the work of art and the world; images and the living; the forms that surround us and those we create – in other words, the fabric of life itself. The driving force of this project will be an exploration of the various meanings and transdisciplinary character of what we define as “Forms of life” in the field of visual arts.

“Forms of Life” will unfold over the course of two years as a monthly seminar created as a time for exchange, reflection, reading, practice and encounters with international artists and thinkers from various disciplines. Several highlights will punctuate the project’s development, including a workshop in Venice during the summer of 2022 that will consider the city and its lagoon as a territory for reflection and artistic experimentation. “Forms of Life” will culminate in an project at Mudam in the summer of 2023, as part of the Mudam Summer Projects organised by the museum’s public outreach service.

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The artists and authors who have been invited in the framework of the seminar in 2021-2022 are: Tim Ingold, Ismaïl Bahri, Katinka Bock, Marion Neumann, François Génot, Irene Kopelman et Delphine Wibaux.

“Forms of Life” is organised by the Royal Academy of Fine Arts and Mudam Luxembourg.



For more information: <https://www.ap-arts.be/en/research/forms-life>

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59th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia
Luxembourg Pavilion
Arsenale, Sale d'Armi, 1st floor
23.04 – 27.11.2022

Tina Gillen
Faraway So Close

COMMISSIONER



ORGANISER



CURATOR

Christophe Gallois, assisted by Ilaria Fagone | Mudam

EXHIBITION DESIGN

Tina Gillen in collaboration with Polaris Architects

VISUAL IDENTITY

Kim Beirnaert

WITH THE SUPPORT OF



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INAUGURATION OF THE LUXEMBOURG PAVILION

Thursday 21 April, 2.45 p.m

PRESS DAYS

Mornings of Wednesday 20, Thursday 21 and Friday 22 April

PRESS CONTACTS

Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean

Julie Jephos | j.jephos@mudam.com

Tél. +352 45 37 85 633

mudam.com

Agence Fouchard Filippi Communications

Philippe Fouchard Filippi | phff@fouchardfilippi.com

Tél. +33 (0)1 53 28 87 53

fouchardfilippi.com

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PRESS VISUALS



Sunshine III, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

390 x 700 cm

Photo: We Document Art / Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean

© Tina Gillen / Courtesy of the artist and Nosbaum Reding, Luxembourg / Brussels



Arctic Forecast II, 2021

Acrylic on canvas

270 x 190 cm

Photo: We Document Art / Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean

© Tina Gillen / Courtesy of the artist and Nosbaum Reding, Luxembourg / Brussels



Sealevel IV, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

270 x 440 cm

Photo: Florian Kleinfenn / Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean

© Tina Gillen / Courtesy of the artist and Nosbaum Reding, Luxembourg / Brussels



Sealevel V, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

350 x 500 cm

Photo: We Document Art / Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean

© Tina Gillen / Courtesy of the artist and Nosbaum Reding, Luxembourg / Brussels



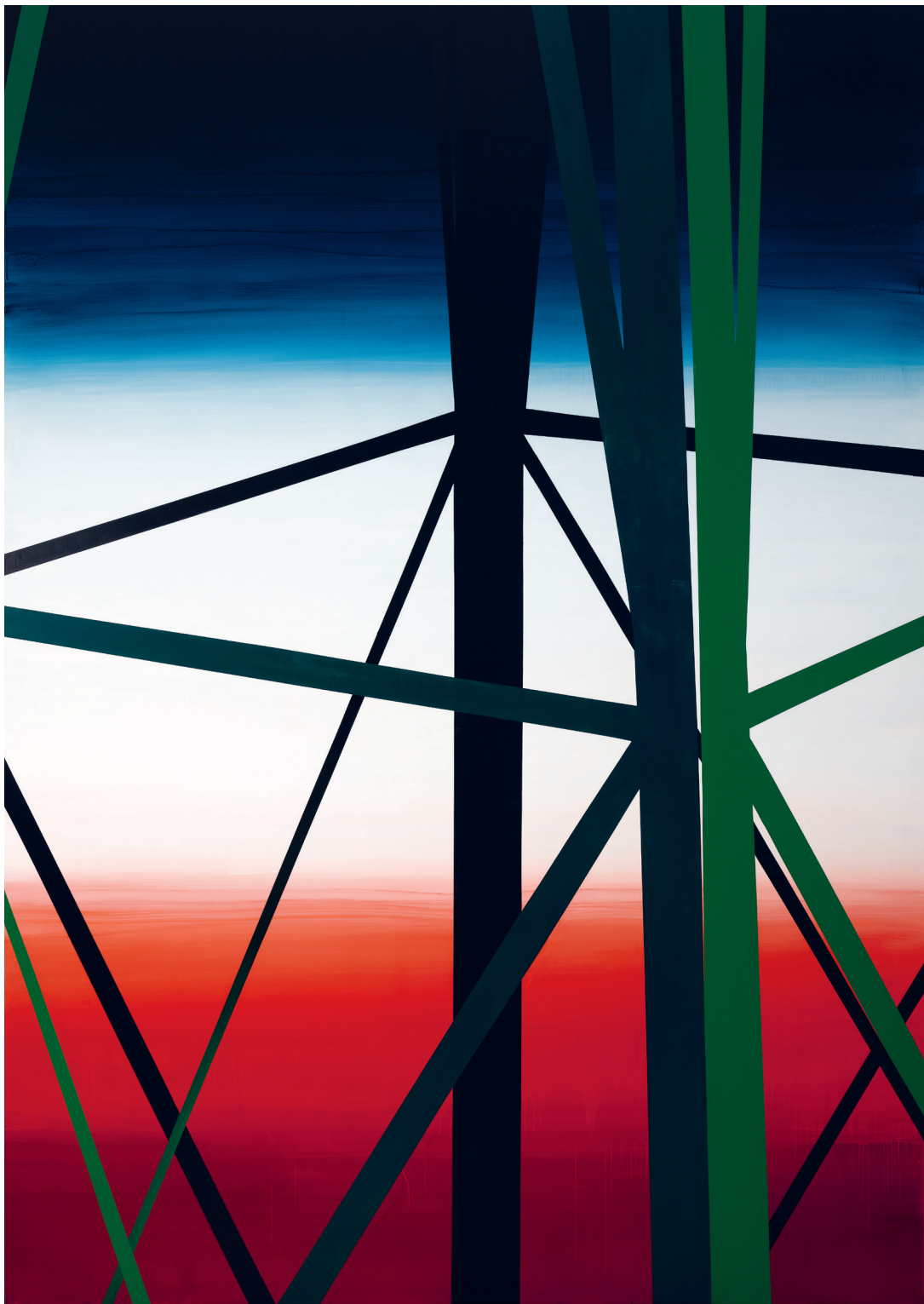
Sealevel VI, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

295 x 480 cm

Photo: We Document Art / Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean

© Tina Gillen / Courtesy of the artist and Nosbaum Reding, Luxembourg / Brussels



Power II, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

380 x 270 cm

Photo: We Document Art / Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean

© Tina Gillen / Courtesy of the artist and Nosbaum Reding, Luxembourg / Brussels



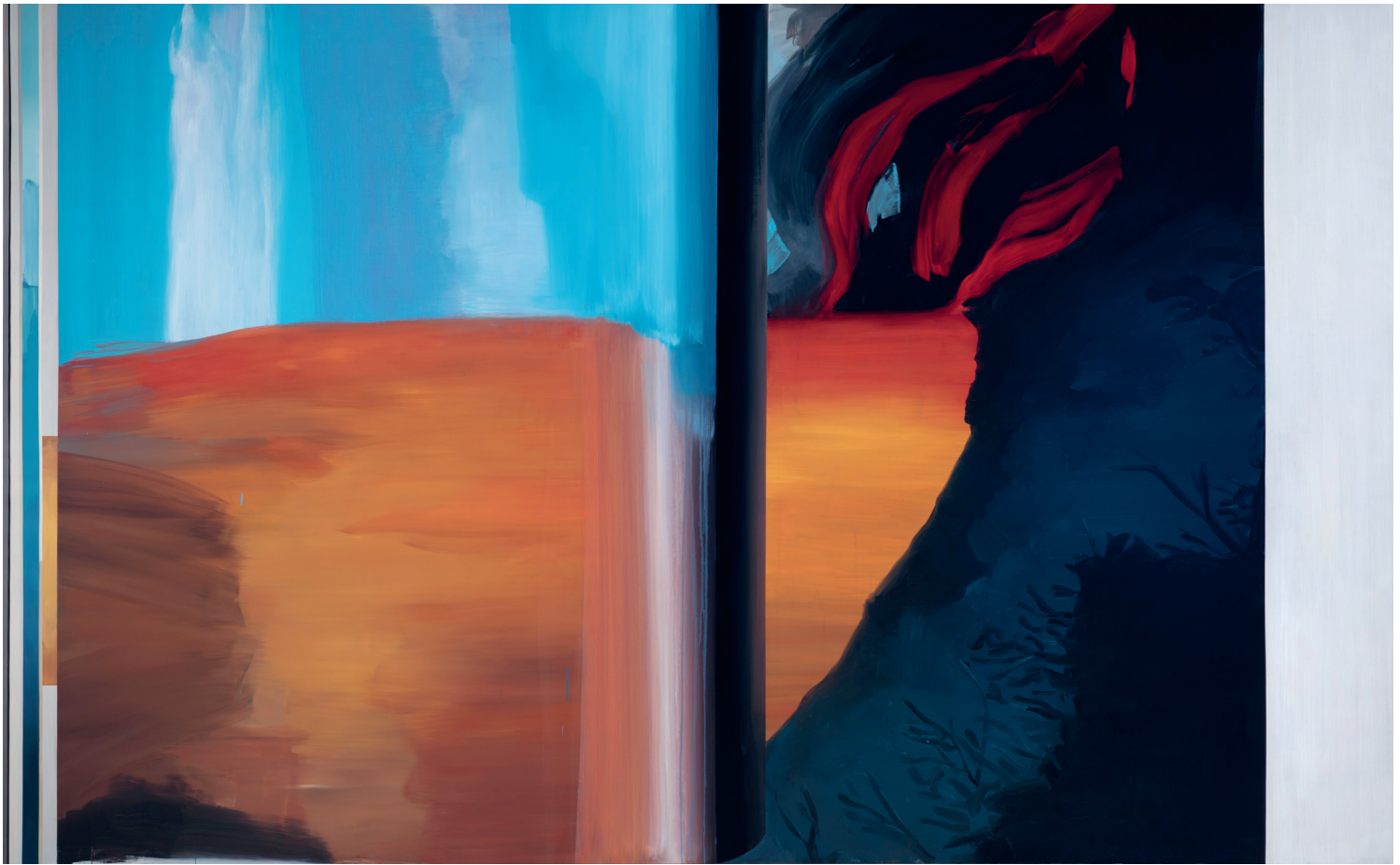
Time Travel II, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

270 x 380 cm

Photo: Florian Kleinfenn / Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean

© Tina Gillen / Courtesy of the artist and Nosbaum Reding, Luxembourg / Brussels



Volcano, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

270 x 440 cm

Photo: Florian Kleinfenn / Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean

© Tina Gillen / Courtesy of the artist and Nosbaum Reding, Luxembourg / Brussels

EXHIBITION VIEWS (SELECTION)



Exhibition views, *Tina Gillen. Faraway So Close*, Luxembourg Pavilion, Biennale Arte 2022

© Photos: Florian Kleinfenn

Courtesy of the artist and Mudam Luxembourg – Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean





AN ONGOING JOURNEY

INTERVIEW WITH TINA GILLEN (excerpt from the exhibiton catalogue *Faraway So Close*)

Christophe Gallois: Two different notions of space have worked in tandem throughout your practice: on the one hand, your interest in various everyday spaces – landscapes, suburban housing, and spaces associated with leisure, like swimming pools, for instance – and on the other hand, the pictorial space itself, which is a constant source of reflection and inquiry for you. A good example of this would be one of your very first pieces, *Häusersequenz* (1996), which in many ways is a seminal piece.

Tina Gillen: I made *Häusersequenz* twenty-five years ago, when I was still a student at the Hochschule für Angewandte Kunst in Vienna, and this piece was indeed foundational in my painting practice, gave direction to my work. It emerged from the environment I was in at the time. I started collecting images of suburban houses as if they were portraits of people. Dwellings, and more broadly any space we transform or shape, are portraits of the people who inhabit them. In my work, I am interested in universal spaces that are archetypes of sorts. For example, the images of the swimming pool and the tent stem from personal memories and experiences, but they are also deeply anchored in our collective consciousness, and what I am engaged in is arriving at a form that contains both dimensions. My paintings are moments of confrontation with these images. They offer an experience of their limitations, their complexity, their contradictions.

C. G.: Photographic images play an essential role in your work process. How would you describe your relationship to them in the context of your painting practice?

T. G.: I record the space and the environment using different methods: I take photos, I collect images and objects, but I also gather notes and thoughts on various subjects. The amassed images that make up my archive are closely connected to my own perspective on the world. In a way, it is through them that I see what's around me. I gather iconographic sources, slowly building a visual world around the idea or motif I am focussed on at the time. I do work with photographs, but my practice does not consist of reproducing them in painting form. I am interested both in the impact these images have – why I find them engaging, striking – and in what makes them incomplete, in what they lack. Above all, my process consists of fragmenting, deconstructing these source images to then reconstruct my own image. This is often the longest phase of my production and allows me to preserve vital information only.

C. G.: In your hands, these images go through various processes: you isolate certain fragments, you transform them, combine them with other images... These operations occur early on during the conception phase, but only really take shape through the act of painting. Your paintings often exhibit a certain, subtly orchestrated ambiguity between directions that could seem to be in contradiction with each other, but which find some sort of common ground in your work: somewhere between abstraction and figuration, painterly gesture and linear precision, a documentary and an imaginary approach, and the

commingling of various scales. With that in mind, how do you view the pictorial space?

T. G.: The pictorial space is where this process occurs in a very intuitive way. It is the space where all the information that feeds my work can be synthesised. Sometimes, I try to bring together images that contrast heavily or almost oppose each other around a single motif. I try to restore the inherent ambivalence of all things – between beauty and ugliness, for instance –, the confusion that can occur between memory, reality, and projection. I try to translate a feeling in all its complexity. The things that dwell in our brains are not neatly organised like a filing cabinet...

Painting allows for these connections, this interweaving, and these occasional collisions to occur between visual elements that are different from each other, all within the same pictorial reality. Paint as a material has its own language, one that often eludes me. The challenge is to create a dialogue with this material to better direct the image. The outcome is always unexpected, but never completely random.

As for the production process itself, my compositions build up as strata. I go back and forth between these layers: I usually paint from background to foreground, but once I get there, I usually work my way back to the background. A motion sets in. Erasure also plays an important role. Erasing can sometimes revive a shape. A form of play develops between figurative elements and elements that are more formal or abstract. Throughout this composition process, I seek to simplify the image for myself and for the viewer.

C. G.: A piece like *Katrina* (2008), whose starting point was the eponymous hurricane that hit Louisiana in 2005, is a particularly good example of this process, from the ‘feeling’ you sought to translate through painting to the dialogue between its figurative and abstract elements.

T. G.: When I am conceiving a painting, first I try to establish a site, a mood, a feel, a tone. This work is in no way connected to photography. It’s a more abstract, more expressive process that comes from within.

For *Katrina*, I produced the background according to this method, prioritising gestures and movement that aligned with the concept of a hurricane. I then added figurative elements, bit by bit. The car, the façade and fragments of the houses destroyed by water emerge from this abstract background. The gestures and the speed that came with the production of the background contrast with the piece’s figurative elements, which are calmer, as evidenced by the lines on the car that represent the traces the water left as it receded. Two temporalities are at play here: movement and rest.

Another factor that contributes strongly to the mood of this piece is how light is treated. The influence of light on how we perceive and understand things seems crucial to me. Light sources are rarely present in paintings; they are usually situated outside the frame. Similarly, vanishing points can be depicted within the frame or exist outside of it. This out-of-frame area is very engaging to me. I like the idea of working with the fragments of something greater.

C. G.: Over the last decade, your work has been marked by your willingness to step outside the limits of the canvas to explore relationships between painting

and the exhibition space. You have experimented with this aspect in the context of some of your exhibitions, in parallel to your studio practice. Namely, I am thinking of the exhibition *Playground* at Mudam Luxembourg in 2012 and *Echo* at Bozar in Brussels in 2015. Looking back at your practice, we can see works that appear to foreshadow this direction, starting with the mural paintings you made in the early 2000s at Casino Luxembourg – Forum d'art contemporain in 2002; Platform Garanti in Istanbul in 2004; and at M in Leuven in 2010 (*The Falls*). Could you speak to this progression?

T. G.: It was very gradual, and here too we could go all the way back to *Häusersequenz*. This notion of sequencing, of seriality, which is directly related to the space, is crucial to this piece. *Häusersequenz* comprises twenty-four paintings, but they are not autonomous, isolated works. They function as a whole, both as a sequence and as an archive. Typically, when this piece is exhibited only some of the paintings are hung up, while the rest remain stored in a small crate that is an integral part of the work and is placed on the ground near the exhibited paintings. When I was making this piece, I was also working with slides stored in little plastic boxes. I replicated this, but with small paintings. In the years that followed I continued working around the principles of that series. In 1998, I produced a group of paintings around the motif of the tent: for two months I painted the same tent, progressively deconstructing it with every new painting. When I showed that series shortly after at the Hoger Instituut voor Schone Kunsten (HISK) in Antwerp as part of an open studio event, I realised the importance of how and where paintings were hung in the space, of their rhythm, and the impact of these factors on the paintings themselves. They were small, so there was no direct relationship to the architecture of the space. Shortly thereafter I produced my first mural, *Waterchute*, as part of *In/Out – Bouillon*, once again at HISK, in 1999. The exhibition space and its architecture were now also supports for my paintings. In 2001, I made another mural, *Ceiling* (2001), at Alimentation Générale gallery in Luxembourg, which unfolded not just onto a single plane but over a whole corner of the space. There was this occupation of three-dimensional space and a specific vantage point from which to view the work.

I was interested in working with the illusion of space and in incorporating the viewer's position into my work. This offset the fact that my paintings were and still are, for the most part, devoid of human figures. Every time, I want the viewer to see what I myself am seeing. This concern is present throughout my work; the viewer's gaze is integrated into my paintings. This is one of the components that brings life to the painting.

C. G.: Another key moment in this creative journey was your exhibition *Playground*, for which you created a painting installation, *Monkey Cage* (2012), inspired by nineteenth-century panoramas.

T. G.: With *Monkey Cage*, I was trying to incorporate the viewer's movement into the work itself. The piece was so big that to experience it fully, one had to move through it, almost like a tracking shot. This experience extends the gaze, adds a temporal component. The way I approached the space came from the subject of the painting itself, which was inspired by sceneries I had seen at the Antwerp Zoo. My studio was located across the street from it for several years and I

would often visit – especially the spaces where various species of monkeys lived. Each cage had a painted backdrop that evoked the animals’ natural habitat. I used the pattern of these sceneries and repeated it to cover the whole painted panorama. Even if the panorama wasn’t a full circle, I still wanted to give a general sense of being trapped, confined. Sometimes this is how I see the world. We also confine ourselves in these sorts of sets that completely cut us off from reality.

C. G.: You took it one step further with your 2015 exhibition *Echo* by using a figure from one of your paintings, *Structure* (2011), and transposing it into the space as a fully-fledged sculptural object (*Structure*, 2015). How did this dialogue between painting and space come about?

T. G.: For that exhibition, I was planning on having a wood panel that would close off the space and alter the viewer’s movement. I made this connection between the materiality of this scenographic element and my 2013 painting, *Hurricane*, which depicts a wooden house that has been turned upside down – a very simple image, like a silhouette. During the conception phase, this panel quickly turned into a support structure for a mural painting (*Echo*, 2015) depicting the same motif, and making wood a part of its vocabulary, because in some places it remained visible.

At the centre of the installation was *Structure*, the sculpture you were just describing. The painting it originated from was itself inspired by a construction made to support a billboard. So, there was this transposition from space to painting, and then from painting to space. Near this there was *Sundown* (2015), another painting on wood that was propped up against the wall and sat on the floor, as if it were a billboard that had been taken down and set aside. There were two other paintings in the exhibition, *Rain or Shine* (2013) and *Matterhorn (Prisma)* (2015), both of which were concerned with the optical deconstruction of images: through broken glass for the former, and through a prism for the latter. All these pieces related to each other, as the exhibition title suggested: there was a proliferation of resonances between them.

This is the landscape I sought to create. The works could be seen as autonomous, but I put a lot of care in the experience they would provide as a whole, in space, through movement.

C. G.: This brings us to *Faraway So Close*, the project you have devised for the Luxembourg Pavilion at the Venice Biennale. In keeping with *Echo*, you are incorporating the space into your work. *Faraway So Close* is a painting-based installation more than it is a painting exhibition; there is an emphasis on the viewer’s visual, spatial and physical experience of this installation that unfolds throughout the architecture of the Sale d’Armi. To what extent did you draw inspiration from the pavilion itself?

T. G.: The location itself was my starting point. From the outset I was interested in the history of the Sale d’Armi, which was built in the fifteenth century and originally used to store weaponry and ammunition in the naval and military complex that was the Arsenale. How could I integrate my paintings into a place like this, with its loaded history and inherent constraints? How could I show paintings in a space where they cannot be hung on the existing walls?

Rather than opting for a scenography in the traditional sense – building an architectural structure, temporary walls –, I wanted to work with the space. The size of my paintings, how they would respond to the height of the space, immediately became self-evident. As I was thinking about the past uses of this place, namely its military function, one of my initial instincts was to use a motif I painted in several pieces in 2016: a sun, which can also be seen as an explosion, and whose size will correspond to the size of the space. Then, the idea quickly came to arrange my paintings as if they were being stored in the space.

C. G.: Rather than exhibited.

T. G.: In storage, yes. As if they were there only temporarily, waiting to be moved and rearranged again. Another source of inspiration for the display was the idea of a film set: a place where painted film backdrops were stored, or like a set still under production.

C. G.: This echoes the connection your work has with film. Previously, this connection has occurred through certain motifs, like in *Playground* (2008), where you reproduced the shape of a play structure that appears in Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1963), and, more broadly, through the fictional, filmic mood present in some of your paintings.

T. G.: A phrase I wrote in one of my notebooks as a student comes to mind: 'projection on canvas'. There is a white canvas, the film starts, and suddenly an entire world appears on the canvas. I often make this connection with my painting practice, even if both mediums are very different temporally. In films, images supersede each other – they appear and then disappear almost immediately –, whereas with painting this all has to be condensed into a single image. This is how I see the paintings that make up my Venice installation: I drew various motifs from my work of the last few years and in a way I am now projecting and reinterpreting them in the context of this set. I am giving free reign to my past work.

C. G.: And, together, what are these motifs saying?

T. G.: The paintings are still in production, but I am working with motifs pertaining to natural phenomena that are beyond our control, like meteorological events, rising sea levels and volcanic activity. There will also be the 'exploding sun' image, as I just mentioned. In some ways, these motifs are connected to the four elements that were once considered as the building blocks of the world, but most of them also evoke the consequences of human activity on landscapes and on the environment. The paintings are autonomous, but as a group they will form a 'climate' around the central component of the installation: the *Rifugio* (2022).

C. G.: With this idea of the set comes the consideration of paintings as material, as objects, as you were already doing with *Häusersequenz*, with the small canvases that could be moved around and rearranged, or with *Monkey Cage*, which took on the form of a backdrop inspired by the pre-film apparatus of the

panorama. It was with *Monkey Cage* that you first used wooden structures to present your paintings on, a device you will also be using in Venice. We could also discuss your paintings depicting sets and screens whose backs and construction are exposed. Namely, I am thinking of two drive-in paintings from 2006 (*Drive-In I* and *Drive-In II*) and of *Caravanning* (1998), which depicts the titular word spread out across a landscape, similarly to the Hollywood sign.

T. G.: I want to show what's behind things, the 'backstage'. All the stretchers and canvases painters have to store in their studios are always very present. These tools are part of the material and visual universe of painters. In the context of a studio, the backside of any given painting is often as visible as the front. This brings to mind a scene from a documentary film on Howard Hodgkin: as we enter his studio, a whole series of canvases can be seen facing the wall. He had in fact built screens to hide his paintings on wood, which often took him several years to complete. It's a fascinating scene. Maybe it takes a painter to understand this! He didn't want his own paintings to constantly be looking at him. This 'architecture' of painting is now part of my vocabulary. It was present in my exhibitions at Mudam and Bozar. Painting is not just about what appears on the canvas, it's an object in space.

C. G.: The other key component to your Venice project, which your exhibition is centred around, is an architectural and sculptural construction that dialogues with the paintings: the *Rifugio* you just mentioned. This element is the continuation of a lineage of motifs present across your practice: dwellings, tents, shelters, birdhouses, etc. As was the case with *Structure* – your installation at Bozar – its shape comes from one of your earlier works, a small painting on paper titled *Shelter* (2018). What are the origins of that painting?

T. G.: Its very refined outline was inspired by a seaside maisonette in Sangatte, in the north of France. In *Shelter*, I removed everything that was around this structure, as if its whole environment had been erased, washed away by the water. It looks as though it's floating in this ethereal, immaterial space. It could be seen as a dwelling detached from any context, unmoored, floating in an unreal landscape. For Venice, I wanted to project myself into this space of which I only know the exterior and imagine how it might be to see the world from within it.

C. G.: What is the role of this refuge in the exhibition? Beyond the central position it holds, it also appears to have a metaphorical function.

T. G.: The refuge has a strong connection to the paintings that will surround it and which, conversely, are all about the outside world. It is the heart of the exhibition, the element around which it all gravitates. It is a polysemic space. It is a shelter, a place to recharge, a refuge where one can prepare to face the harshness of the world. But it is also an open space, permeated with the images and the information around us. It is a creative place, driven by desires, ideas, impressions, hopes. It is both my studio and a space I am offering to the viewer. It is a mental and concrete space. This refuge is closely connected to the here and the now. It is anchored in the present and in the space, whereas to me paintings act more as projections into elsewhere, into the past or the future.

C. G.: The title of your exhibition, *Faraway So Close*, based on the English title of a Wim Wenders film, highlights this connection between inside space – the domestic – and the world outside. Your whole practice has been built on questions around the relationship we humans have with the world around us. With this project, you are extending this line of questioning into the space and are offering a physical experience of it. Could you speak to this relationship between proximity and distance? The ‘room of one’s own’ Virginia Woolf described, which your *Rifugio* could be reminiscent of, is now permeated in many ways with the outside world.

T. G.: My installation clearly echoes the contemporary experience of domestic space: as we sit in our homes the screens our televisions, computers or phones light up and we can see crowds in the Kabul airport trying to flee Afghanistan, the bodies of those who died at the gates of Europe, fires and floods caused by climate change... Like many of us, I am overwhelmed by all this. My installation talks about these images that find their way into our domestic environments, about these worlds that accumulate, intersect, overlap. Our everyday lives are now made up in great part of these pervasive images. It is of course important to pay close attention to them, but we must also know how to remove ourselves from them. The best quality of this refuge is that it is empty. Everyone should have their own refuge...

C. G.: Surprisingly, you developed this project shortly before the Covid-19 pandemic broke out.

T. G.: I did conceive this project a few months before the pandemic started, and of course it took on a whole new meaning with what we have been through and continue to go through. The pandemic has upset the relationship between domestic space and the outside world through our experience of this invisible threat and the concrete reality of lockdowns, and all the information that reaches us through digital channels. One of the most important lessons I’ve retained from this experience is that the environment is not something separate from us. On the contrary, we are inextricably linked to it.

C. G.: By addressing this relationship between interior space and the outside world, between proximity and distance, your exhibition project also discusses the role of painting today, albeit indirectly.

T. G.: I am simply trying to be part of the world and to translate it. I want to talk about my time. If I take a step back, I can see that I have tried to stay true to my artistic path. That is, speaking to whatever time and space I found myself in. When I was a student in Vienna, I worked with the environment I was in. Then, for my artist residencies in the United States and Asia, I also tried to work with what was around me. My work definitely contains its share of autobiography about my work. It may not be obvious to others, but it is to me. Painting is always with me. The title I gave to one of my first solo exhibitions, in 2001, and which I reused for my 2009 monograph evokes this path: *Necessary Journey*. I was already aware that painting is an experience that unfolds in time and in space. It’s an ongoing journey.

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