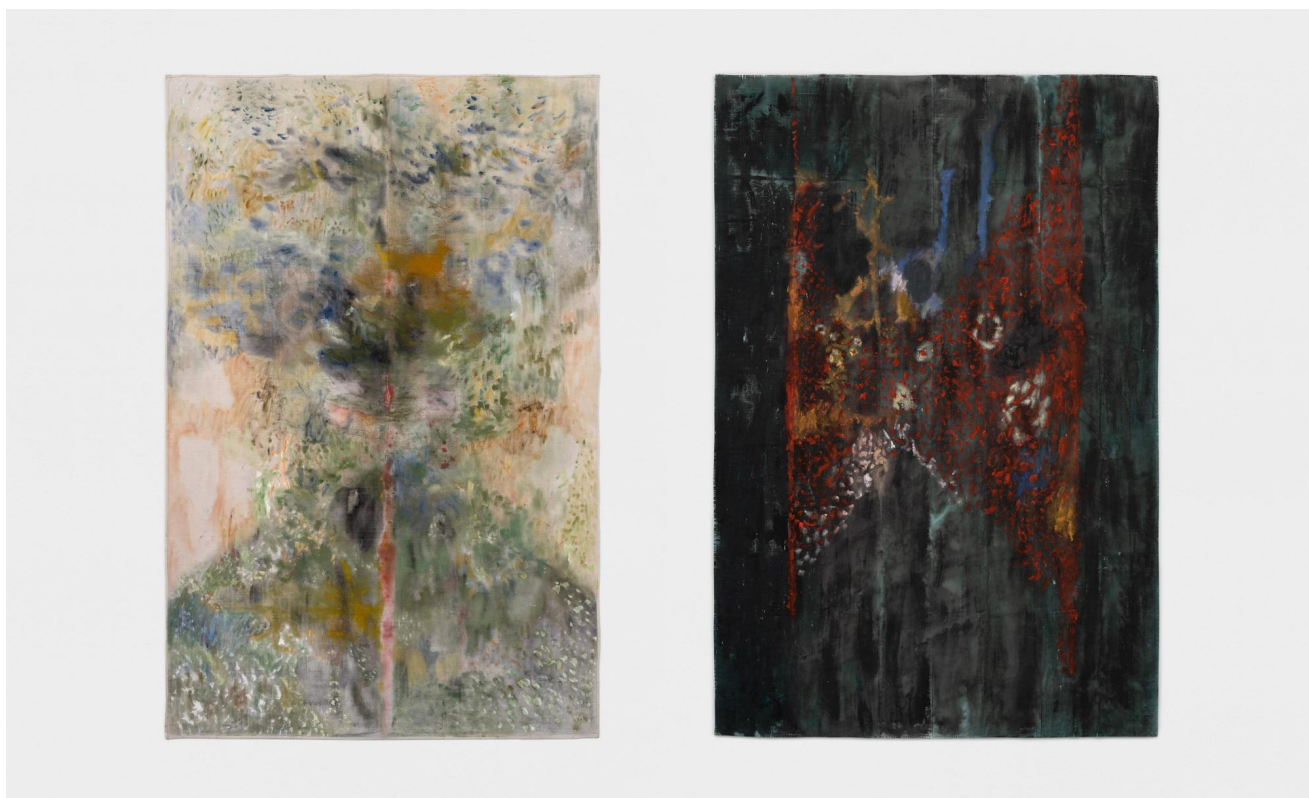


Ted Gahl: Le Goon

30 Orchard St, Gallery 1 ▪ Jan 12 - Feb 18, 2023



Harkawik is pleased to announce *Le Goon*, our second solo exhibition with painter Ted Gahl. Building on imagery he developed in “Stories from the City, Stories from the Sea,” here he delves further into an ocean of muted memories and historical associations that are legible only as hazy apparitions. Gahl charts a course through an emotionally charged landscape: a trench where isolation and connection embrace, where melancholic figures strain to make contact with an ineffability beyond the border of the canvas. Through a dialogue between small, mid-size, and large-scale paintings on unstretched canvas, Gahl implores us to look under the surface, offering attentive viewers the gift of conjuring new meanings over time.

The frames on Gahl's smaller paintings are composed of chopped paint stirrers, a nod to the artist's youth spent painting houses and lattice framing techniques of the past, as well as an interest in blending high and low culture. He juxtaposes smaller figurative works with gargantuan 8-foot tall paintings that cascade down unstretched canvas, rooted in abstraction inspired by landscape. These large paintings are intuitive, with one movement or color influencing the next, allowing the artist the physical space to deepen his investigation of consciousness. He calls these works “tarps,” a nod to the cloths thrown down to catch errant paint drips. Here, he deepens his ethical engagement with the many

modalities of paint and creative labor.

The artist employs figuration as a vehicle to explore abstraction, seamlessly gliding between the two methods. Figures are adorned in coats that serve as portals into another dimension, brimming with thin layers of muddy greens, sky blues, and merigold oranges that feel plucked out of a Post-Impressionist painting. Within Gahl's controlled confines of abstraction, the world enlarges, revealing traces of the night sky, throngs of people, fish in a stream.

Gahl's work is intensely cinematic, as if projected onto a screen or trapped inside an unraveled roll of film. Several scenes unfold within a single painting, allowing a multitude of emotion to erupt. Fleeting moments of tension abound. Two nude women emerge from a body of water reminiscent of a Georges Seurat or Milton Avery landscape, but their togetherness is fractured by a hulking tower of darkly-hued abstraction. A translucent trio bathing in a deep Rothko red exudes a biblical aura; an outline of an angelic body reaches towards the top of the canvas. Gahl's airy yet deft brushstrokes feel like wading into a pond, while a ghostlike figure dissolves into the landscape, as if imprisoned in the sparse solitude of a Norbert Schwontkowski painting. The artist plays with the horizon, causing us to question if the shadowy form is sinking into water or simply lying in the grass. Are we above or below ground? Is this death or relaxation? Are they the same thing?

At the heart of *Le Goon* lives a yearning for connection. Mortality cannot help but leak through the canvases and become personified. Gahl's work invites us towards intimacy, towards deeper questioning. The answers emerge from the water and evaporate towards the heavens before we can touch them, leaving us only with the feeling of the mist kissing our skin.

—Lauren Gagnon

Ted Gahl obtained his BFA from Pratt Institute in 2006 and MFA from Rhode Island School of Design in 2010. Recent solo exhibitions include MAMOTH, London; Harkawik, Los Angeles; Halsey McKay, East Hampton; Massif Central, Brussels; Alexander Berggruen, New York. Recent group exhibitions include Valentin, Paris; Bjorn & Gundorph, Aarhus, Denmark; S.M.A.K., Ghent, Belgium; Halsey McKay, East Hampton. Gahl is a 2022 recipient of a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Grant. He lives and works in Northwest Connecticut and Brooklyn, New York.