

Owen Rival: Long View

30 Orchard St, Gallery 2 • May 13 - June 17, 2023



Harkawik is pleased to announce *Long View*, the first New York solo exhibition of Toronto-born, Texas-based painter Owen Rival. At once deeply diaristic and thoroughly available, the show consists of 5 acrylic paintings and 4 works on paper that are, first and foremost, self-portraits of Rival and his wife Jenny in their Houston apartment. *Long View* is a psychological meditation on the domestic, one in which the artist constructs a world of personal meaning. Rival's investigation into the quotidian illuminates the inherent tension between "indoor" and "outdoor" spaces we occupy in contemporary life. A tendency towards reflection runs like an electric current throughout his paintings, whether that be a visual reproduction that takes place on mirrors and laptop screen, or a likeness of image—that of the self and the

surrounding world. His hyper-saturated paintings appear bathed in neon light, offering the experience of a theatergoer lost in the lush and sensual visual worlds of filmmakers like Wong-Kar Wai or Edward Yang.

Economic and social conditions have a way of leaking into private life. Much in the way that Nan Goldin's photographs of interiors reflected the shifting sociopolitical tides of the 1980s back at the viewer, *Long View* is an intimate glimpse into the politics of the present. In *Tutorial*, absent of natural light, we see a guitar lesson unfold online, the teacher reduced to pixels on a computer screen, a testament to the increasingly isolated nature of personal transactions. In *S'mores* the young couple roast marshmallows in their bedroom, depicting a tradition steeped in an American nostalgia for the great outdoors (but subjugated indoors). Allusions bubble to the surface and drift upwards like smoke; we briefly catch a whiff of modern life's incompatibility with the natural world and the ways in which technology both siphons us away from nature, and redefines our understanding of it. In *Trash*, we see humanity's dominion over nature reflected in an electric-green snake plant; we are victims of information-overload yet have no knowledge of where our trash ends up.

Throughout *Long View*, physical space is not an obstacle or inhibitor, but a reality to be adjusted to, like a houseplant that grows towards the last rays of sunlight leaking through the window. Rival transforms into the protagonist of his own fictions, documenting the domestic and infusing it with beauty, inviting contemplations with scenes of vivid color and poignancy. At the same time, he consciously limits the parameters of his inquiry, offering us a set of limited tools, scenarios, and thematics from which to construct a narrative. In the series' first work, *Inward*, the artist appears deep in introspection, using the repetitive nature of the mirror to depict a subject caught in a psychological loop. In his final self-portrait, *Outward*, the only painting in the exhibition that features entirely natural light, a red fluorescent dot shines like a laser on Rival's reflection in the window. Perhaps he is bidding farewell to a prior version of himself, relinquishing control to emerge easily into the light.

—Lauren Gagnon