

The approach

Mike Silva *New Paintings*

6th July – 5th August 2023

Mike Silva paints portraits, interiors and still lives that are intimately connected to personal memory. Whilst the importance of his subject matter is evident, the artist's fascination with the medium of painting is perhaps less often acknowledged. Painting is Silva's language: through a process of observing and making, he attempts to reflect a part of himself which cannot be articulated by any other means.

For his second solo show at The Approach, Silva will produce a series of new paintings where light is the central protagonist. Bringing a contemporary approach to a major art historical trope, Silva possesses a seemingly effortless flair for noticing and depicting light; producing subtle changes in atmosphere that poetically communicate the complexities of human desire and loss.

Light is a mediator in Silva's paintings, acting as an agent to connect inner and outer worlds. As shafts of daylight shine brightly across bedroom walls, obscured blue sky glows blindingly through frosted windows or the last afternoon sun is diffused by sheer linen curtains – the noise of the outside world is met with the safety and stillness of Silva's private domain. Windows act as portals or thresholds, bridging the realm of the personal and intimate with the public and exposed. In the direct portraits included in the show, a haptic sensibility is induced as light glimmers and shadows reflect across skin.

Though most of the works in *New Paintings* centre on interior scenes, human presence remains at the core of Silva's practice. Compositions of bedrooms or bathrooms are in many ways as much portraits as his studies of *Mark* or *Gary*. An unmade bed or dishes left at the kitchen sink demonstrate human activity, acting as a proxy for the person though not directly visible in the scene but whose traces tell us they recently inhabited the space depicted.

Silva works from photographic images, but the transition from photograph to painting is slow: Silva first captures his scenes on camera, suspending impermanent moments in time which might only be returned to many years later once the image has had time to 'cure'. Gradually we see the same scenes reappear in his work. Paintings are produced from photos that each offer a slightly new perspective on the same moment in time: a different angle, curtains open or closed, with or without a central figure; like building blocks or jigsaw pieces that slowly consolidate to form a single picture. The process of painting is meditative for Silva, who works from photos taken as far back as the '90s or early '00s, as he tries, perhaps futilely, to reactivate attachments to the people and places he paints, to capture something that is ultimately already lost.

For further information or images please contact Alba Herrero alba@theapproach.co.uk