

*Jonah Pontzer*

*'Fresh Hell'*

*29 Jun – 16 Sep 2023*

*Rose Easton*

*Missing Time* by Jonah Pontzer

Stuck to me the second Mike said it  
A recollection of voids and winding  
pool covers, above ground, for most of  
the nineteen-nineties I welcomed the  
Emptiness, acknowledged the gravity  
Questioned the teachers preaching  
We can't ever overcome it, so stepped  
Onto the surface, no tension beneath  
such truth to support me, and through  
that glass my body broke, heavy but  
not really – *what are physics, btw?*  
Fresh Hell. Fuck's sake. My voice had  
changed, the words no longer sounded  
The helplessness, the dark, the tears  
Undetectable, indistinguishable, with  
My last breath not big enough to buoy  
and frozen little hands can't displace  
cold water, the wickedness of night,  
The innumerable mournings dragging  
over the surface, pinning me under.

Text by Joseph Yaeger

In my estimation paintings tend to fall into two camps, that is the window and the mirror. Representational paintings, which lend themselves to all manner of parasymphathetic relationships, are usually and traditionally mirrors. We see Saint Sebastian filled with arrows and feel the wounds in our own body. He/she/they become I without apparent effort on the part of the viewer. It is, or feels, natural, automatic.

Perhaps unexpectedly the rise of the painting as a window – contrary (or totally opposite, metaphor-wise) to how Alberti conceived of it – concurred with the Industrial Revolution. Abstraction, which is inaccessible, generally speaking, to the sensuality of the body, insinuates the canvas as a window into the studio. You see through the painting to its creation. They are paintings of evidence, mark, trace. In this regard we see through the painting to the artist. And it should be no surprise the Americans – king individualists – elevated abstraction to a pedestal of Real Importance, where painting was, in a cynical sense, secondary to the mythic souls pulling such works from the aether.

Coincidental then to find aether as the primary subject that Pontzer here is working from, and of. Likewise to find the mirror/window dichotomy inverted. These paintings are – insofar as we recognise ‘subjects’ within them (insects, arachnids, black holes, cat eyes, war machines) – windows, both in the literal sense of

the transom installation as well as the metaphorical question posed in the layered complexity of their form: who made these? And how? And with what? And why? These are questions one poses at any exhibit, probably – notice how artists inspect others' paintings like detectives – however in *Fresh Hell* the answers are not so easily located. The paintings reflect, they shape-shift. At angles a colour may flash holographically toward its complement, red to green, orange to blue, seemingly alive, very much like the light the paintings deftly depict. But if you the viewer have been placed below a transom, gazing up as if for transcendence, the suggestion is the door is or cannot or will not open. You, we, Pontzer, is trapped. Trapped upon the garish chroma of purple turf, the works trapped by faux knotty pine surfaces, in a simulation of the bedrooms and basements and dens every late-twentieth century American (*this writer is one*) can identify almost by smell, by the quality of cool, slightly damp or stale air, by the knowledge, without having ever explored the space, that somewhere in the dark behind a door is a mattress without sheets, or shelves filled with slapdash labeled Tupperware, or a chest freezer, casket-like, replete with Hungry Man dinners and a box or two of pick-your-region popsicles. The feeling elicited is unlike any other space possibly on earth and it is sorrowful. It is the space where the weird thing happened at that sleepover once, where memories for whatever reason return, and cycle. You are literally underground staring at wooden walls, not so unlike another, more permanent, eventual space.

And it is here Pontzer has placed us. Or not here, but 'here.' This is a gallery. This is London. Meaning the 'here' is a psychological one, hence the purple turf in place of shag carpet. Hence the transom. Hence the paintings.

Jonah Pontzer (b. 1989, Pennsylvania, USA) lives and works in London. He received his BA in Performance Design & Practice from Central Saint Martins. Pontzer completed residencies at Sarabande: The Lee Alexander McQueen Foundation, London (2019) and McKinsey & Company (2016). Selected solo exhibitions include *Placeholder*, La Forchetta, Bethnal Green Road, London (2022); *SUMMER BODY*, Sarabande: The Lee Alexander McQueen Foundation, London (2019); *Can't Host*, Hollybush Plc, London (2018) and *Re: Joyce*, McKinsey & Company, London (2016). Selected group exhibitions include *On the edge of fashion*, Rose Easton, London (2023); *Unity*, The Artist Room Gallery, Tom of Finland Arts & Culture Festival, London (2022); *Triggered Economics or How to commit to the inevitable*, 34 Bruton Street, London (2021); *Power, Moves*, Online (2020) and *Stable*, Sarabande: The Lee Alexander McQueen Foundation, London (2019).

## List of works, clockwise from entrance

Jonah Pontzer

*Admire the deep gravity of it, its timeless eyes [Lois], There would be a nobility then, there would be a birthday, like it or not*, 2023

Ultrachrome, colour pencil, promarker, watercolour, alcohol-floated dry pigment, acrylic, and oil on paper mounted on wood, in artist's frame.

64 × 90 × 32 cm

Jonah Pontzer

*What about now? Is this better? How 'bout now? Hello? Mom? Hello? I made for you a lanyard*, 2023

Ultrachrome, colour pencil, promarker, watercolour, alcohol-floated dry pigment, acrylic, and oil on paper mounted on wood, in artist's frame.

64 × 90 × 32 cm

Jonah Pontzer

*An Uneventful Horizon (call it thalassoastrophobia [Edie] or This is it, boys, this is war)*, 2023

Ultrachrome, colour pencil, promarker, Xerox, watercolour, alcohol-floated dry pigment, acrylic, and oil on paper mounted on wood, in artist's frame.

64 × 90 × 32 cm

Jonah Pontzer

*Superior – for Doors, I & II (new day leaks through the window, in possibility, a home)*, 2023

Ultrachrome, colour pencil, promarker, watercolour, alcohol-floated dry pigment, acrylic, and oil on paper mounted on wood, in artist's door frame.

260 × 90.5 × 32 cm

Jonah Pontzer

*An Uneventful Horizon (Out of the mournful sweetness of touching comes love)*, 2023

Ultrachrome, colour pencil, promarker, watercolour, alcohol-floated dry pigment, acrylic, and oil on paper mounted on wood, in artist's frame.

64 × 90 × 32 cm

Private View, Wednesday 28 June, 6 – 8pm  
Open, Wednesday – Saturday, 12 – 6pm

The exhibition will be accompanied by a series of live events and activations. Programme to be announced. Follow @roseeaston223 to be kept up to date. For all enquiries, please email [info@roseeaston.com](mailto:info@roseeaston.com)

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