

## COASTAL SIGNS

Anto Yeldejian  
*Monument Valley*  
16 November 2023 – 27 January 2024

### WORKS

Anto Yeldejian  
*Royal Academy, 2023*  
oil stick and oil on canvas  
1680 x 2100mm

Anto Yeldejian  
*Sebastian' s Inferno, 2023*  
oil on canvas  
1950 x 1550mm

Anto Yeldejian  
*Parade Float, 2023*  
oil and acrylic on canvas  
1950 x 2800mm

Anto Yeldejian  
*Expatriate, 2023*  
oil, acrylic, sharpie, indian ink on canvas  
350 x 450mm

Anto Yeldejian  
*Shadow of a Doubt, 2023*  
oil stick and oil on canvas  
1680 x 2100mm

## COASTAL SIGNS

Coastal Signs is pleased to present *Monument Valley*, a solo exhibition of new work by Anto Yeldezian.

In Yeldezian's recent paintings images from a myriad of sources are layered on top of one another. Personal, highly specific, images from the artist's family history coalesce with over-circulated media images from conflicts in the middle east (such as a silhouette of camels against burning Kuwaiti oil-fields and scenes of prisoner abuse at Abu Ghraib).

American popular culture features prominently in the paintings; the outline of a Disney castle glows like a portal in *Royal Academy* (2023) and in *Parade Day* (2023) an enormous Garfield balloon floats over the New York skyline. The title of the exhibition, *Monument Valley*, refers to another degraded icon; the vast geological structures of the Navajo Tribal Park in Arizona that have acted as backdrop to many Western films, including a cartoon after-life in Looney Tunes.

Art History, too, haunts these paintings; a ghostly version of Peter Paul Ruben's *Hippopotamus and Crocodile Hunt* (1615) curls violently under *Royal Academy* and in *Sebastian's Inferno* (2023), an oddly smooth-bodied Sebastian stands bound to a column, the martyr ready for a volley of arrows.

No single image in Yeldezian's paintings can be read in isolation; they bleed into one another, distorting, concealing, pulling in and out of focus. History appears piled up, at times tranquil or harmonious, and at other times swirling and contradictory. In Yeldezian's process images are synthesized, very adeptly, into painterly tableau – the historicising medium *par excellence*.

Almost all of the human faces in *Monument Valley* are hooded or obscured in some way. Sebastian's supplicant face is barely visible under a dog-like hood complete with slobbery tongue, and the shackled prisoner of *Royal Academy* is hooded with a more ferocious wolf headpiece, facing off with an Alsatian straining at it's leash. The shadow puppet, in particular the dog, recurs in Yeldezian's work, deployed as short-hand for the fraught relationship between image and reality, truth and fiction, even symbol and society.

The works in *Monument Valley* are large scale except one small painting, titled *Expat* (2023), of the artist's passport photo-page. The bare facts of the artist's identity are legible, including his birthplace of Bahgdad, while his face is rendered by a SnapChat 'disney' filter. The images that would typically watermark the New Zealand passport pages are replaced with a wispy line of billowing smoke and a dying sea bird stranded in oil on a beach; the very image that Jean Baudrillard, in discussing the Gulf War, proposed "will remain the symbol-image of what we all are in front of our screens, in front of that sticky and unintelligible event."

Anto Yeldezian (b. 1990) is a Tāmaki Makaurau based artist of Armenian heritage. He holds an MArch from the University of Auckland and completed his MFA at Elam in 2023. Recent exhibitions include: *Nova*, Sumer Auckland (2023), *Bottega Pradada*, Sanc Gallery Auckland (2022), *Cruel Optimism*, Artspace Aotearoa Auckland (2021).