

Tristram Landsdowne
Well Weather Window

May 3 - June 7, 2025
Artist talk May 31st

Galerie Nicolas Robert, Toronto, is pleased to present *Well Weather Window*, a solo exhibition of Tristram Landsdowne's most recent watercolour paintings. Using a strategy of overlapping images and successively recessed spaces to create works that are composed almost entirely of framing devices. One image gives way to another and another, shifting gears each time between genres, viewpoints, and subjects. Developed by way of small intuitive drawings, a multitude of combinations are worked through in pursuit of new relationships between surface and depth. The final arrangements are then laid out in watercolor, the artist using a high level of precision to translate the source material into pictures we can seemingly reach into as if they were vitrines.

These works borrow from wide-ranging traditions of compressed space such as Van Eyck's recessed interiors, architectural cartouches, trompe-l'oeil painting and computer desktop design, finding connections between art-historical pictorial structures and contemporary imaging technologies. But they also draw from the artist's everyday world. Dramatic New Mexico landscapes border moldy foodstuffs, an abandoned building passed by, a morning smoothie. A view out the studio window frames a skull and snake tattoo that has seemingly come to life and crossed into our reality.

By bringing these many strands together Landsdowne taps into the slippages and pile ups that occur as we immerse ourselves in the image commons. How do we give order and meaning to our visually cacophonous worlds? Which images can we believe in, and which are trying to deceive us? With their drop shadows, mats, beveled edges and inset spaces, these paintings become depictions of themselves, dramatizations of the act of looking at a work on paper. A distance is held then, a level of artifice that foregrounds our role as viewers and undermines the reality of the depiction the more it seeks to convince.

These meditations on representation are not new. They go back to the most ancient surviving texts on the subjects of art and painting, from Socrates' denunciation of imitative arts to Pliny the Elder's account of Zeuxis and Parrhasius competing for illusionistic supremacy. And yet they are perhaps as relevant today as they ever were, as we reckon with the superpowers of AI, deepfakes, and metadata portraits of all of us that seem to know us better than we know ourselves. As archaic as it is, perhaps painting is still an arena that is slow enough, deliberate enough, to contemplate how we think about what we see. Is it cake?

Tristram Lansdowne (b. Victoria, BC, 1983; lives/works in Toronto) graduated with an MFA from the Rhode Island School of Design (2016) and a BFA from the Ontario College of Art & Design (2007). Recent exhibitions include Luis De Jesus Los Angeles; CHART Gallery, NYC; New Art Projects, London, and Musée d'art contemporain des Laurentides, Quebec (2024) and he was a 2024-25 fellow at the Roswell Artist in Residence Program, in Roswell, NM. His work is in numerous public and corporate collections in Canada and the US, including the National Gallery of Canada, the TD Bank Collection, the Royal Bank of Canada Collection, the Bank of Montreal Collection, the Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago and the Kimmel Harding Nelson Center.