

HANNAH HOFFMAN

Glawr

Merlin James, Caitlin MacQueen, Yuri Masnyj, Janice Nowinski,
Ellen Siebers, Susan Jane Walp
Organized by Caitlin MacQueen
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“we must make the best of it, cherish the past and honour those writers... who take antiquity for their model and write, not for pay but for Glawr.’ (Orlando could have wished him a better accent.) ‘Glawr’, said Greene, ‘is the spur of noble minds. Had I a pension of three hundred pounds a year paid quarterly, I would live for Glawr alone. I would lie in bed every morning reading Cicero. I would imitate his style so that you couldn’t tell the difference between us. That’s what I call fine writing,’ said Greene; ‘that’s what I call Glawr.’”

–Virginia Woolf, *Orlando* (1928)

In 2004, the Royal Academy of Arts in London held a survey show of the artist William Nicholson. In the accompanying catalog the painter, Merlin James, states:

“Pragmatic, empirical instincts are partly what enable Nicholson to avoid being precious or merely decorous, or satisfied with easy effects. But concerns with identity, relationship, distortion, illusion, uncertainty, clarity, endurance, closeness and separation all find echoes, metaphorically, in the human psyche. The outer world functions as a screen, and objects as containers, for inner conditions... Inner and outer reality correspond.” –Merlin James, *Words About Painting* (2004)

The slippery conditions James observes here are the criterion for *Glawr*. Without *glawr*, they could never have the *Patience* (a word Susan Jane Walp includes as an object in her still life, *Cut-open Pummelo with Knife, Black Walnut, Leaves, and Cork (Patience)*, 2025), to resolve themselves with this much deliberation. These works are made by assessment, by stepping back and forward, outside of a constructed world and back into it again. The doing and undoing, and the handling of materials. These works hold the knowledge gathered from simply touching the object, feeling its resistance, making changes, and then living with those changes. Every centimeter is taken into consideration. Each work is a tight ship loosely handled.

“What I take from seeing all that is that every single work in the show - each piece is made out of individual little components.

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The works have multiple layers and things going on. The landscape (*Landscape*, James (2004)) has all these bits of stuff on the surface ... my eye jumps around and I try to discover little areas. The artists dance with their materials.” –Joe Espinoza, in conversation

Shifting between the component parts and the full composition, the works blossom in front of you. The materials, the colors, the evasive relationship to genre: all that tension creates a scenario built up to bear the weight of sustained attention. That’s what I call *Glawr*.

–Caitlin MacQueen, June 2025