

Justin Mortimer: *Tomorrow Space K*

Some notes on the paintings



Home 1-3

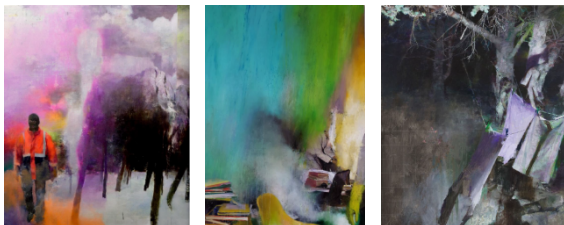
These three paintings began with free, gestural abstract underpainting. This was the same technique I used with my Hoax series of dying flower paintings. These three paintings had many divergent identities until the final layer was put on; in fact I'm not even sure if these paintings have even arrived at their final versions. The more I work these days and the more mature I become as an artist, the more uncertain I am of my painting's destinations. For instance, Home 2 was exhibited in a totally different guise in Singapore 2015 and London 2019 as a landscape and a flower painting respectively. It was only in 2020 that it became an interior having flirted with the idea of it being a dark landscape again. The figure of the man was painted in in at the very last minute -in fact on the very last day I was allowed to visit my studio before London was locked down due to the C-19 pandemic.

The large painting Home 3 started out as a painting of a dark, night-time garden with three figures standing by a tree long before it became an interior. It was only when I put the three reworked paintings together in my studio that I realised I had made work echoing our current situation: our current interior world.



It is Here, Odessa

These two paintings, (It Is Here) being the title painting of my 2016 London show were my attempts at creating a psychotic, chaotic space: a psychodrama of madness, humiliation and ritual. They were made (possibly more importantly), at the time of the Syrian refugee humanitarian and Ukrainian crises.



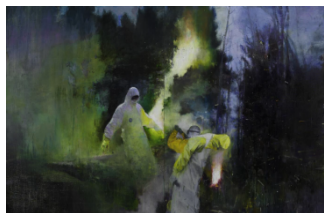
Outlander, Slinter and Tract

Outlander has similar themes reflecting on political alienation and protest.

Slinter is an Australian slang word for a liar possibly out of use now but I like the sound of it! For me, even though it was painted 4 years ago (interestingly at the time of Trump's inauguration), it has resonance now with the Alt-right, fake news paranoid Facebook society we all now inhabit with its manipulation of truth, inherent revision of history and neo-con fairy tale bullshit.

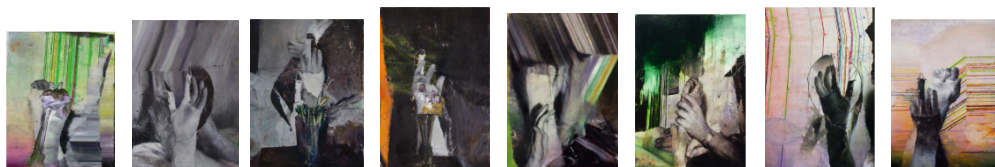
Tract is the earliest painting in this show having been made in 2012. It has been exhibited in New York in the Haunch of Venison gallery in Chelsea, NYC. At the time I was looking at images of refugee camps around the

world and thinking how I could possibly express how it feels to be displaced like that, so I placed the figures in a space I know very well, the garden in a house we rent in France for our summer holiday. For me, dread is the intrusion of the nightmare into the cherished.



Zona

The diptych *Zona* started out as a response to the race riots that were happening in Missouri, USA a few years ago. I was collecting pictures of of backlit tear gas smoke drifting through suburban American streets. I was also reading a fair bit of contemporary Japanese fiction and became fascinated with with the multiplicity of Spirits inhabiting everyday Japanese society. Along with that I was looking at my collection of pictures of doctors working in the Ebola outbreak. I felt there was a weird correlation between their personal protective suits and Southeast Asian mediaeval armour. What I intended by putting all these diverse images together, I don't know. Maybe for me it is a retreat to a pagan place. But somehow it is applicable to where we are now. Perhaps it is the unknowable inhabiting our mundane world unseen.



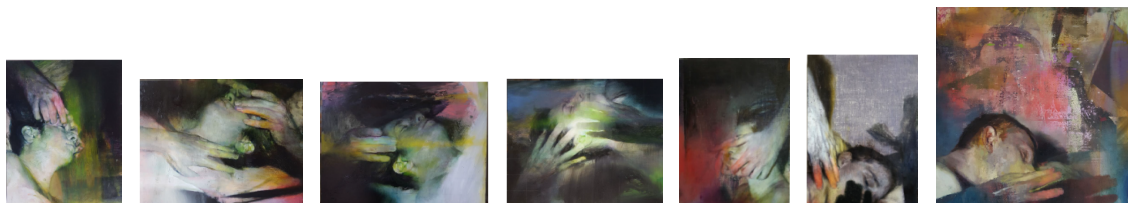
Kult Series

This series of hand painting was inspired by images found in an old book of wounded American soldiers from World War II. The book illustrated plaster of Paris techniques to set limbs shattered by gunshot wounds. The backgrounds of the paintings were made by collecting images of broken plasma TV screens via a quick Google search. I was looking for a figurative abstract language that was formal and contemporary and not gestural or intuitive. I loved the way the diagrammatic, rather banal photographs presented these broken hands as sculptures with their various wire appendages and architectural splints.



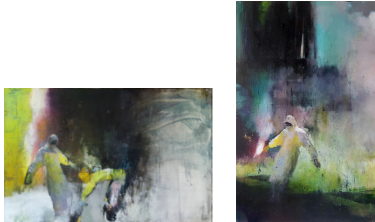
Untitled (Glarus), 2 and 3 (Outside)

These three paintings were made just as the Covid pandemic was being talked about as a real, existential threat. I was also thinking a lot about Degas' paintings of horse races. The mountains are based on photographs I took in the canton of Glarus in Switzerland and I was wondering what a pandemic would look like in idyllic countryside locations- or certainly in a person's own idyllic dream space. As for Degas, I was thinking about the way he paints the ground in his race course pictures. I also knew at this point that there was an opportunity to show in Korea and wanted to reference the importance of mountains and the reverence in which they are held within Korean folklore.



Untitled Head Series 1-7

These were painted during the UK lockdown in my spare room at home having no longer being allowed to travel to my London studio. At the peak of the anxiety and worry felt in society around me I felt I was unable to paint explicit pictures of people in hazmat gear and protective clothing. My way of responding to that situation was to make intimate paintings or portraits where emotional contact or attempt at contact had been misaligned or or inhibited. This series was helpful for me to make as it enabled me to stop thinking about what was happening outside. All was going well until I unfortunately broke my painting hand so for the next 6-8 weeks I had to paint left-handed.



Zona Study and Ikidusama Study

These two paintings were made entirely left-handed. I probably attempted around 15 pictures left handed of which maybe 5 were exhibitable! As I was unable to use a computer to make my usual initial digital collage, I went through my archive of prints to find unused composition layouts that I made in preparation for Zona and another painting from that time, Ikidusama. I did find that my lack of finesse and downgraded skills brought a new freshness to the work and has made me think about bringing a two handed approach to painting in the future.