

the  
contemporary  
british  
painting

prize

group exhibition

2017



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prize 2017  
**group exhibition**

The Stables Gallery | Orleans House Gallery  
Riverside | Twickenham | London | TW1 3DJ

25 August - 22 October

Michael Ajerman | Jake Clark | Jadé Fadojutimi | Louise Giovanelli  
Juliette Losq | Cara Nahaul | Simon Parish | Narbi Price  
Alli Sharma | Joan Sugrue | Molly Thomson | Helen Turner



## The Contemporary British Painting Prize 2017

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# Introduction

## The Contemporary British Painting Prize 2017

During an interview with David Sylvester in October 1962, Francis Bacon said “...*what is fascinating now is that it's going to become much more difficult for the artist, because he must really deepen the game to be any good at all.*”<sup>1</sup>

This deepening of the game is a challenge only a small handful of serious painters developed a wish to fully engage with in Britain through the 1980's and 90's, and they included Tony Bevan, Christopher Le Brun, Howard Hodgkin and Paula Rego.

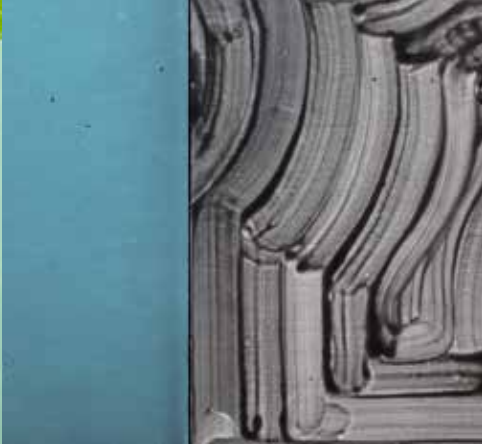
Now, as the 21st century begins to unfold, painting has gained a new relevance to a fresh and growing generation of artists who are fully engaged with the struggles, contemplations and beauties painting offers.

For these 21st century painters the old 'ism's' of the previous century such as Fauvism, Cubism, Futurism, Vorticism and photorealism no longer hold as movements to be adopted and followed en masse. Instead they have been replaced by one big movement: 'individualism'. We see this change reflected magnificently by the artists who have been selected for the Contemporary British Painting Prize 2017. The twelve artists chosen are Michael Ajerman, Jake Clark, Jadé Fadojutimi, Louise Giovanelli, Juliette Losq, Cara Nahaul, Simon Parish, Narbi Price, Alli Sharma, Joan Sugrue, Molly Thomson and Helen Turner.

In their work, we are offered a series of highly original visual interpretations made with the medium of paint. Some borrow from the art movements of the past, adopting the languages of photorealism, abstraction and surrealism as a means to carry their own message, while all display a clear and consistent commitment to uniqueness and individuality. In doing so they are choosing to accept the challenge Francis Bacon laid down 55 years ago - they are attempting to deepen the game - and they are succeeding.

*Robert Priseman*

[1] David Sylvester, Interviews with Francis Bacon, Thames and Hudson, First published 1975, 2002 edition, p. 29



the artists...



# Michael Ajerman

My interest in painting remains firmly in the pursuit of the depiction of individuals.

The concept of turning objects into people and people into objects.

Humour, wit, voyeurism, anger; these are some of the notions that I operate with.

A sense of touch that fluctuates from piece to piece, affected by the subject and ideas at hand.

To use paint to rationalise and investigate various feelings and sensations.

Majority of the time, these feelings and sensations are my own.

Though I am never far from the realisation that I am playing with coloured dirt -

in a serious manner of course.



Acrobat  
*Oil on linen, 122cm x 101cm, 2017*



September in Izmir  
*Oil on linen, 86cm x 66cm, 2016-17*



The Other Way Of Stopping  
*Oil on linen, 60cm x 55cm, 2015*

## Jake Clark

These recent paintings are a response to cardboard models and collages that I have made in my studio. I am interested in creating 3D structures influenced by suburbia and games like crazy golf. I am fascinated by the details of these kinds of places and how they can be re-configured within a different environment. After making the models I then photograph them in dramatic lighting. The paintings then become a strange evocation of these references. The colours are important in capturing a faded yet luminous quality.

I am also trying to create a kind of jumbled-up image. So there is a sense of objects or shapes placed over structures. Some of the paintings have patterned lino stuck to the surface to emphasise this. I want the viewer to get a sense of familiarity but being disoriented at the same time. The models themselves have a DIY craft quality which bring the space back to a domestic interior. They are often made from detritus found in the studio environment. A big inspiration is Brutalist architecture and a backwards look at the space race. The paintings are abstract and totemic in nature yet are meant to suggest a tragedy and humanity at the same time.



Platform  
*Oil and lino on canvas, 80cm x 70cm, 2017*





Flower - Oil on board, 30cm x 40cm, 2015



The Horror  
Oil and lino on canvas, 100cm x 90cm, 2017

# Jadé Fadojutimi

The notion of the 'self' and the fracturing of identity are explored in my paintings through creating locations of familiar unfamiliarity, fears and unknowns. In response, the work hopes to become a journey to establish a relationship with the real.

In an effort to acknowledge our use of escapism to deter from the trauma of lack of identity, my work delves into how we use sense of place to establish a sense of identity. Elements of objects we use to define ourselves become transient on the surface, recognising our tools for escapism to highlight the comforting delusion in a sense of belonging. The work hopes to act as a bridge between the realms of disembodiment and reality. Despite realising these desires, the continued dreaming becomes an endless frustration enacted through the language of paint.

The work tries to engage with a discomfort and a dissatisfaction translated through the medium. An infatuation with the materiality of paint stirs an envy of how paint can illuminate so much character through a catalyst grappling for a sense of its own self. The paintings are born from a collage of my drawings, depicting the frustrating attempts to seduce oneself through line and colour. They translate these thoughts through the material process, hence it is important for the work not to be directly taken from life. The mind's depiction of form and reality unfold through mark making attempting to create an engaging uncertainty. The fascination with paint comes with the interlocking of textures, where the painting converses with itself on the surface - an interaction that lacks control and so liberates the material. By presenting my paintings as environments, their purpose is intertwined with notions of identity to recognise the façade of a sense of place.



Fishing For Steps  
Oil on canvas, 100cm x 145cm, 2017





Lotus Land  
*Acrylic and oil on canvas, 120cm x 150cm, 2017*



Twigs  
*Oil on canvas, 130cm x 150cm, 2017*

# Louise Giovanelli

I am concerned with the visual energy of the painted surface. I engage with perceptual aspects of the medium, attempting to foreground colour, shape, surface, movement and tension. I love how painting operates as a continued dialogue between these facets, functioning as a highly sophisticated system of expression.

My work is an examination of paint's sensorial possibilities. Oscillating between representation and abstraction, I want my works to move within this zone of uncertainty, as this presents (for me) painting at its most dynamic, difficult and problematic.

My recent investigations have included interweaving art historical moments, cultural references and personal histories towards compositions that draw simultaneously on the past and present within a distinctly contemporary configuration.

One approach I take is to appropriate details found within the rich tradition of western art. An aspect or detail, interesting element or peculiarity from a pre-existing work can function as coordinates, allowing an opportunity for re-imagination and re-presentation.

Engaging with tradition and creating this dialogue is an effort to allow my work to exist not just in the present moment, but rather allowing it to operate within a larger referential framework.

I like testing the possibilities of images again and again. Filtering the language of digital tools (duplicating, cropping, rotating, zooming-in) through the analogue process of painting is an attempt to hone in my investigation whilst also complicating the legibility of the source images so they remain undefined.

The resulting works appear as fragments from across time, striving to extract new content and alternative narratives. I am attempting to explore the history of painting as object, the context of its display and reception, and the very mechanics of painting itself to investigate languages of painting both past and present, resulting in works that are curious, cryptic and other-worldly.

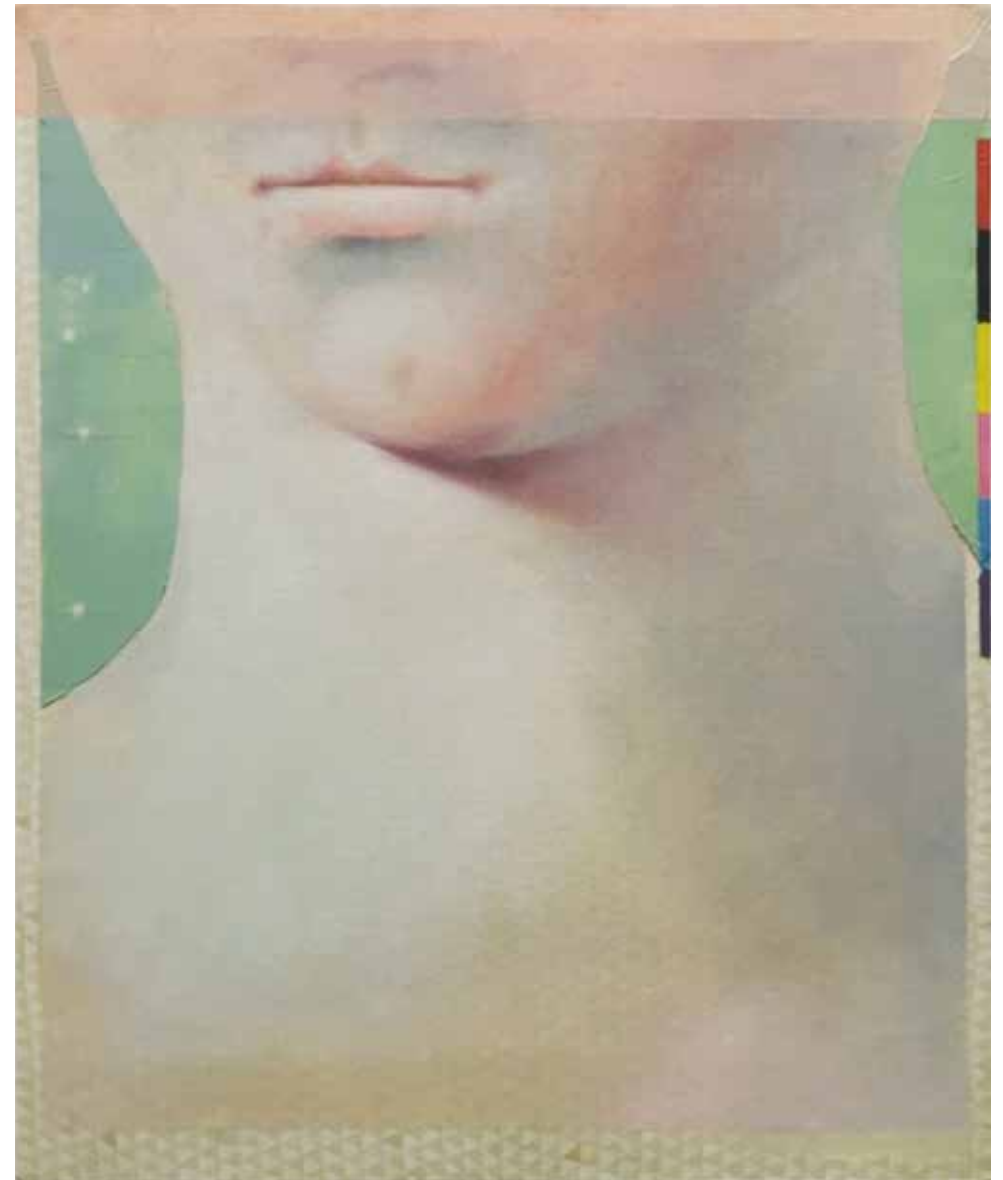


Blue House  
Oil on canvas, 65cm x 55cm, 2017





Mould II  
*Oil on canvas, 60cm x 50cm, 2017*



Recast V  
*Oil on patterned cotton mounted on board, 32cm x 27cm, 2017*

# Juliette Losq

I make detailed ink and watercolour paintings. Through their complexity and depth I aim to challenge the notion of watercolour as being a medium that, traditionally, holds connotations of portability, and which is to be used for preparatory sketching.

Using resist, a traditional material of the water-colourist, I work over the surface repetitively, creating multiple painted layers that simultaneously obscure and reveal those beneath in a process that references the building up of an etching plate. I allude to the Picturesque and the Gothic of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, interweaving their motifs and devices with the marginal areas that I depict.

I aim to evoke an uncertain world hovering at the edges of a symbolic 'Clearing', where wilderness and chaos oppose civilization and order, and in which beauty and neglect are interchangeable.



Loetoken  
Watercolour and ink on paper, 112cm x 150cm, 2017



Penumbra  
*Watercolour and ink on paper, 45cm x 65cm, 2016*

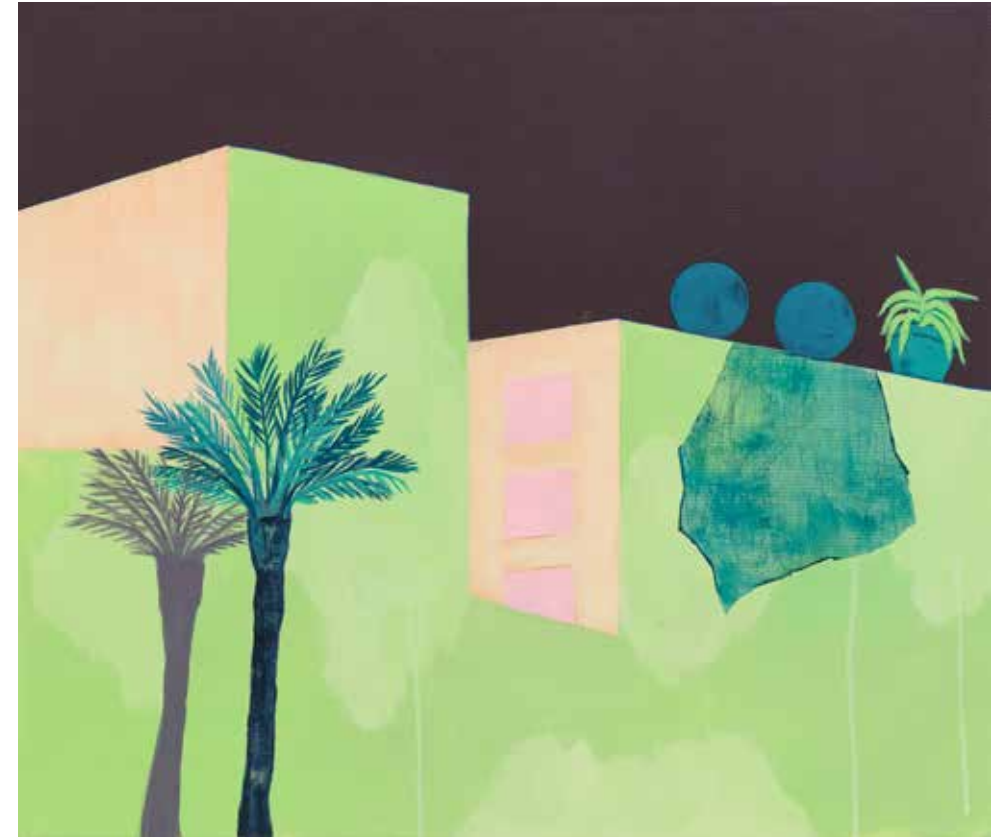
Terra Infirma  
*Watercolour and ink on paper, 45cm x 65cm, 2017*



# Cara Nahaul

My paintings from the series 'Universal Garden' challenge existing narratives and stereotypes about the tropics, using the landscapes of domestic interiors and gardens as a starting point to re-examine the idea of the exotic. Trawling through architectural and lifestyle magazines for images of holiday homes and luxurious garden designs for inspiration, the paintings allude to the projected fantasies from these glossy pages. Many of these paintings are composites of images found in these sources, as well as places visited on my travels.

In my exploration of these spaces, the paintings suggest that the tropics need not be discovered in exotic distant lands but rather somewhere much closer to home, if not home itself. Here, the tropics are not merely a fantastical holiday destination but an interior psychological landscape as well.

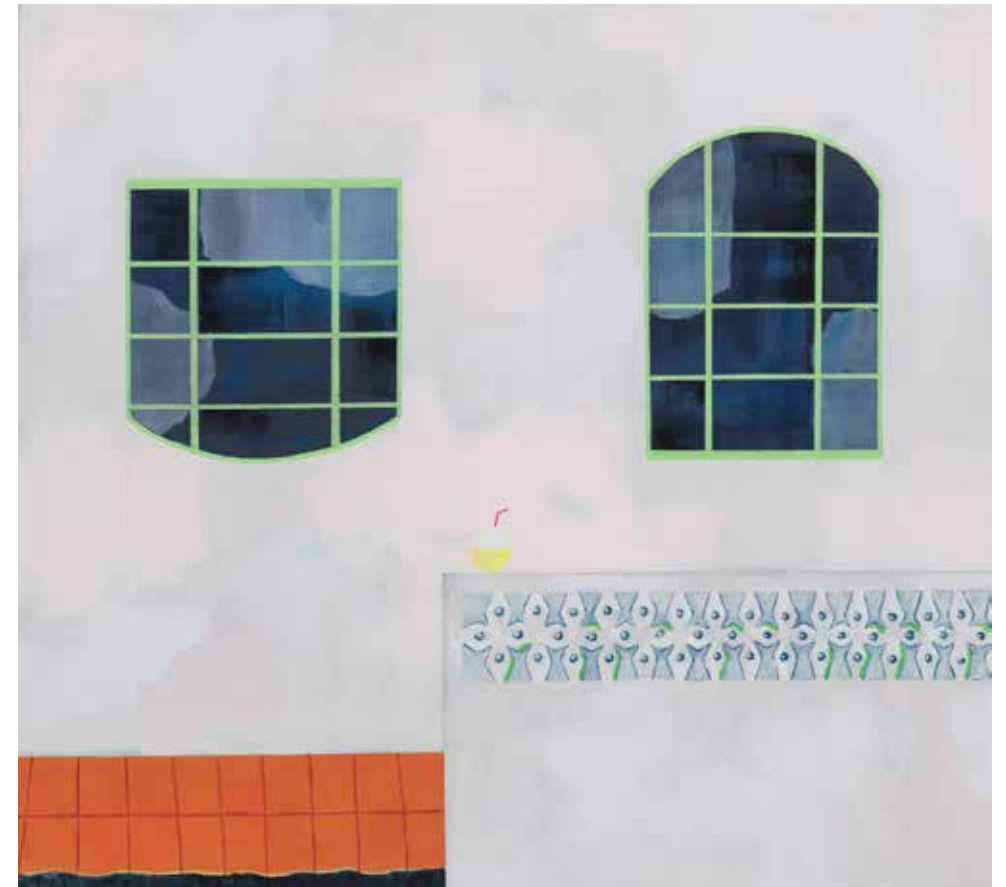


Blind Spots  
*Oil and flashe on canvas, 50cm x 60cm, 2016*  
 Photography Mark Blower, courtesy of Christine Park Gallery





Inches of Dust  
*Oil, oil pastel and flashe on canvas, 70cm x 60cm, 2016*  
Photography Mark Blower, courtesy of Christine Park Gallery

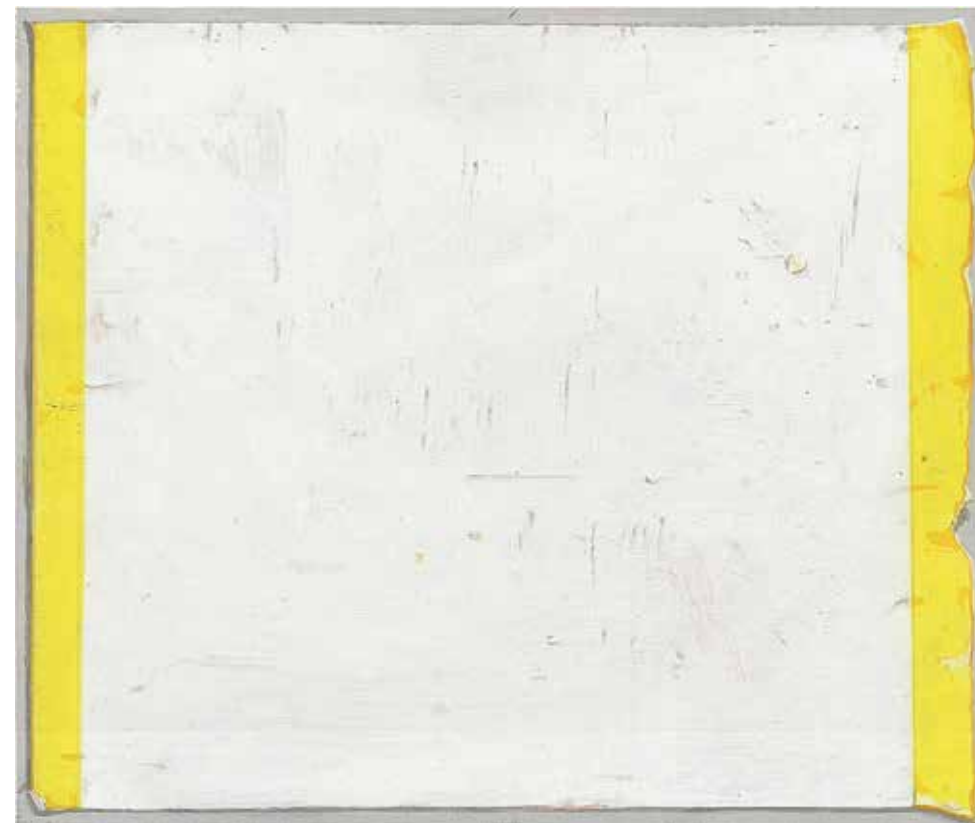


Villa Gandia  
*Oil and acrylic on canvas, 100cm x 110cm, 2016*  
Photography Mark Blower, courtesy of Christine Park Gallery

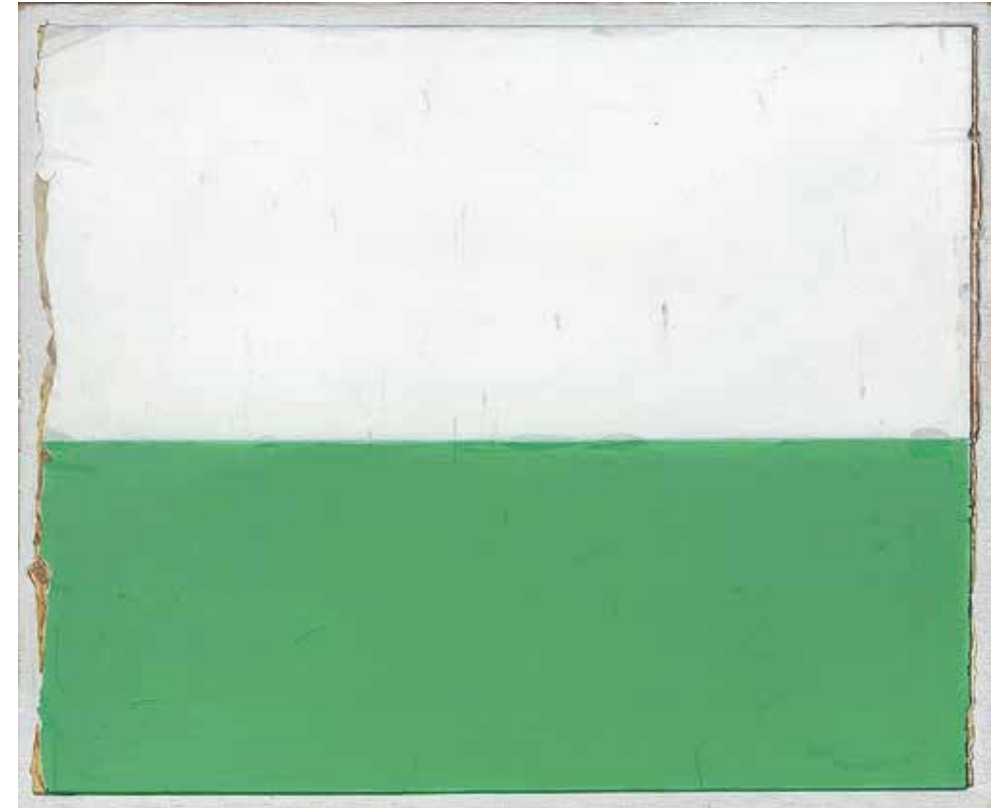
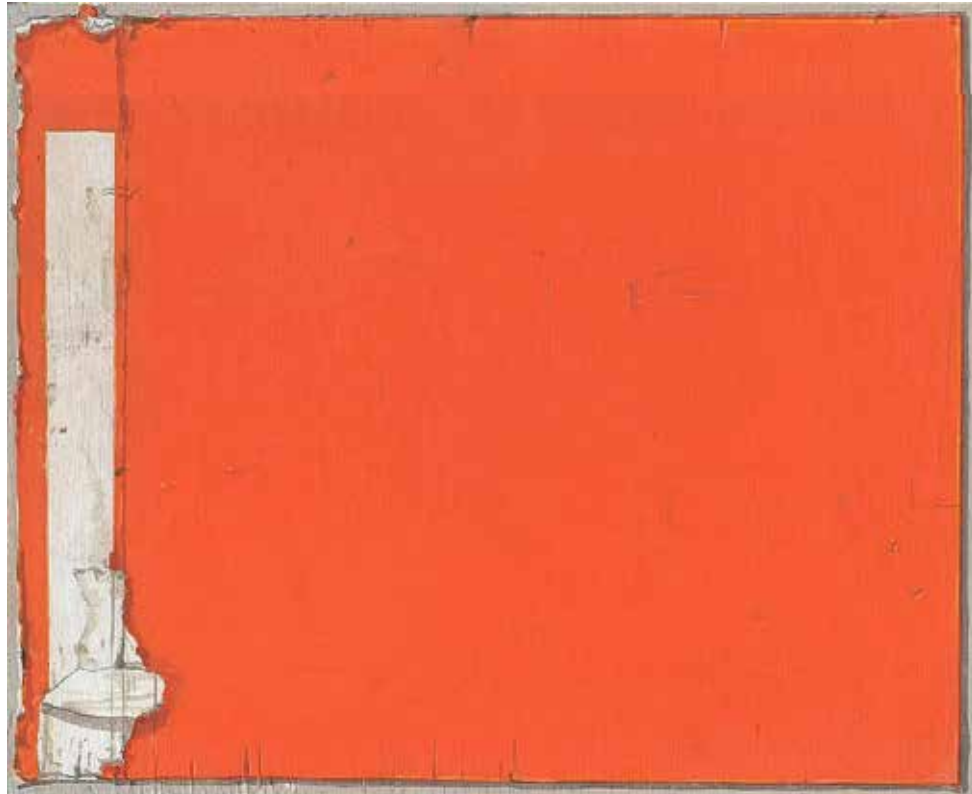
## Simon Parish

An important area of difference between a painting and a photographically based image is its surface. A painted surface develops a very direct relationship between itself and the viewer. This attention to surface can invite close contemplation from a viewer as well as using the distanced view to advantage, often with colour.

My recent works in painting are influenced to some degree by the language of hard-edged geometric abstraction of the 1960s as filtered by and seen through the quotidian: A fragment of contemporary design, found packaging, takeaway menu leaflets, newspaper graphics such as graphs or symbols. These found fragments are collected and allowed to 'float' around my studio becoming more crumpled, worn or painted on and find themselves unexpectedly placed or collaged next to others. This extra 'life' these collected fragments have lead eventually to and often unexpectedly to the start of a painting. The paintings retain an unfinished almost scruffy or scuffed look, and often use a nondescript muted grey as a background colour. Usually small in scale they invite viewers close to the work which has a restrained painterly surface allied with a somewhat melancholic feel.



Untitled 1  
*Acrylic on board, 24cm x 29cm, 2017*



Untitled 2 (Orange)  
*Acrylic on board 24cm x 29cm, 2017*

Untitled 3  
*Acrylic on board, 24cm x 29cm, 2017*

# Narbi Price

My work involves journeys to specific places that have witnessed a range of events - variously historical, famous, personal or forgotten. I research the precise location of a chosen event and, working from photographs taken at the site, make paintings in the studio focussing on the abstract, formal and painterly qualities of the resultant images.

This process removes the conscious choice of subject matter; I must work with whatever is present at the spot. Whilst clearly photographically derived, the paintings use the language of abstraction to simultaneously acknowledge and disrupt the representational image. The paint is transparent, opaque, glossy, matt, dilute and impasted, often within the same work.

The viewer is not immediately made aware of the specific histories of the sites and is given space to wonder about the multiplicities of events that might have taken place, an effect heightened by the painting method. The experience of the work shifts as we become aware of the provenance of the depicted sites.

My use of disparate techniques and deliberately disharmonious compositions push the works to the point where they teeter on the edge of dissolution. The intention is to produce a subtly disorientating effect in the viewer - there is an awkwardness or sense of unease about the images, but it is not immediately obvious why.



Untitled Shadow Painting (CE)  
Acrylic on canvas, 92cm x 120cm, 2012





Untitled Yard Painting (Albert)  
*Acrylic on canvas, 92cm x 120cm, 2015*



Untitled Yard Painting (Harold)  
*Acrylic on canvas, 92cm x 120cm, 2015*

## Alli Sharma

The idea that where you've come from should affect your life chances is viewed as deeply wrong by most people and, increasingly, social mobility is considered progressive. But does social mobility also come at a cost? There is an emotional concern and a sense of loss at the life left behind. A person may become a cultural omnivore, taking on board new identities, but equally could become culturally homeless, belonging to neither place.

Painting allows me to take an ambiguous glance back at my own past and the emotional investments we make. The North-East working class culture that I grew up in was very different to the one I now find myself in and whilst I love my new life, there is a price to pay, a loss incurred, people, places and things left behind.

Recurring motifs of cat figurines in my paintings started with the kitsch ornament that my grandmother once owned. For me, the ornament is more than its object self; holding memories of people, time and place. Transforming this low culture object into art is also an attempt to reveal the forgotten and overlooked in substantial painterly icons that capture memories of things, people and places loved, longed for and forgotten.



Siamese Cat  
*Oil on canvas,*  
60cm x 30cm, 2017



Two Black Cats  
*Oil on paper, 30cm x 23cm, 2016*



White Cat  
*Oil on canvas,  
60cm x 30cm, 2017*

# Joan Sugrue

I use the codes of classical portrait and landscape painting to explore the language of paint. My work is informed by an interest in historical illustrations, photographs and texts which were the products of a specific geographical and historical time and place. My paintings follow specific lines of enquiry which are often linked to real persons or places. However the paintings that emerge are not descriptive nor are they realistic. During the process of painting the act of searching is given precedence over finding and the compositions are often subject to a long cycle of transformation.

Working with oil on traditional grounds my work aims to engage with the language of painting as well as its historical tradition, shifting between representational and process driven modes of depiction.



Prairie  
*Oil on linen over board, 40cm x 30cm, 2016*





Temporary Madonna  
*Oil on linen over board, 40cm x 30cm, 2017*



The Earl Buffoon  
*Oil on gesso board, 30cm x 30cm, 2015*

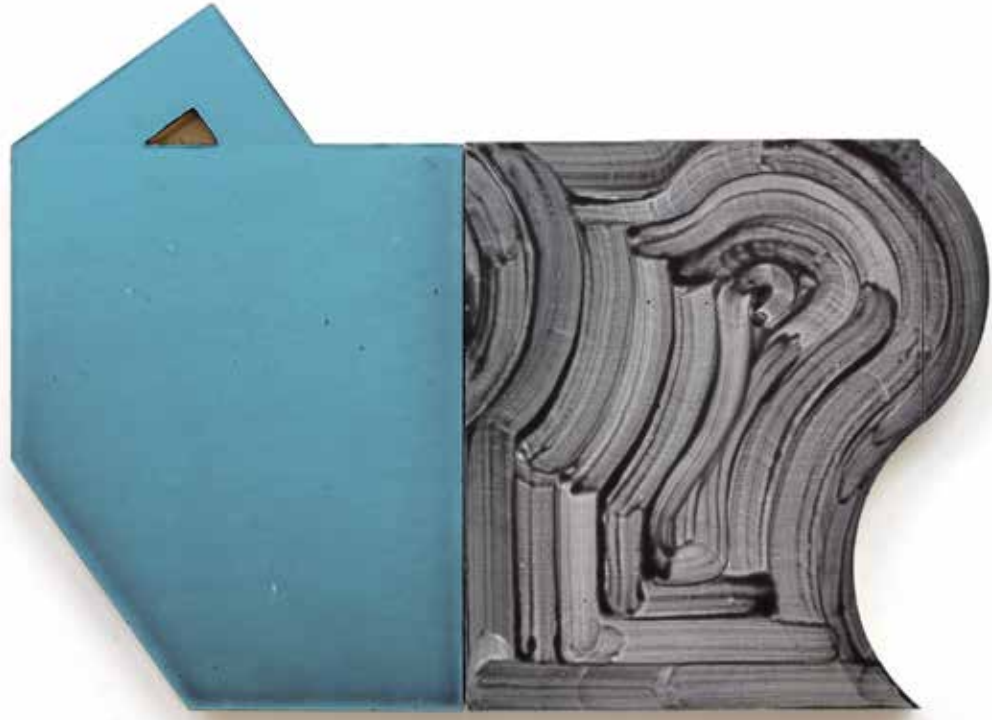
# Molly Thomson

The cut lets the painting breathe, it empties a line, releases a vacuum, exposes a shadow. The cut invades the edge and redraws the boundaries. The cut removes and remains and displaces. It puts the painting in parentheses. The cut is a measuring marker, breaking the integrity of the edge. The cut sheds dust, precisely drawing a line of lost substance so that mending fails, leaves a glitch. Considered damage. Poured skin.

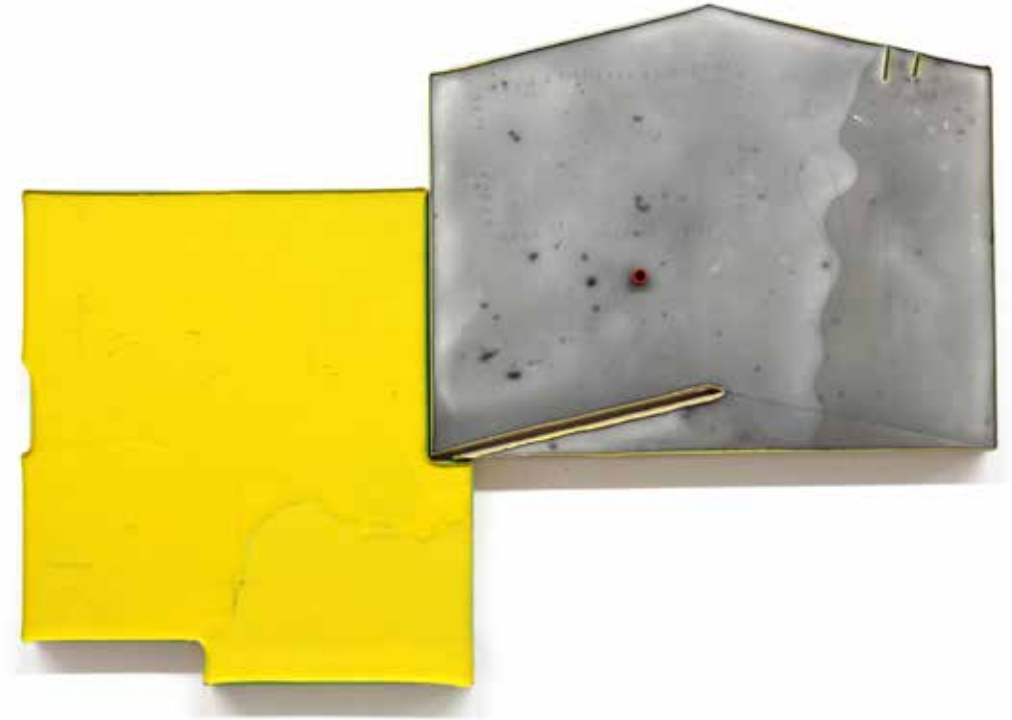
In these pairs of pieces I am interested in the object of the painting and the action of one component upon another. The painting may suggest an allusion to architecture, hint at illusory spaces or turn the given geometry of the painting panel into an alternative one, one that is inflected by removals and accumulations. Incomplete alone, one thing questions the other. The answer is provisional.



Quality of balances  
*Acrylic on board (two components), 32.5cm x 55cm, 2017*



Such tomfoolery  
*Acrylic on board (two components), 31.5cm x 43.5cm, 2017*



The realising of a caprice  
*Acrylic on board (two components), 31cm x 43.5cm, 2017*



# Helen Turner

My work is about investigating an unseen world and the mystery of it.

The starting point is the excitement of the materials and the feelings I want to express.

My paintings are made intuitively out of collaged layers of all types of paint, paper, fabric and canvas.

The subject emerges out of the process of making.

I am interested in transforming my drawings using motif combined with the involvement of texture, surface and colour.

I want my work to be evocative and have a presence.



Squirrel  
Oil, gloss, eggshell, acrylic, paper and glitter on canvas, 150cm x120 cm, 2017





Black Box  
*Folded canvas, eggshell, paper, glitter, gloss on canvas, 150cm x 130cm, 2016*

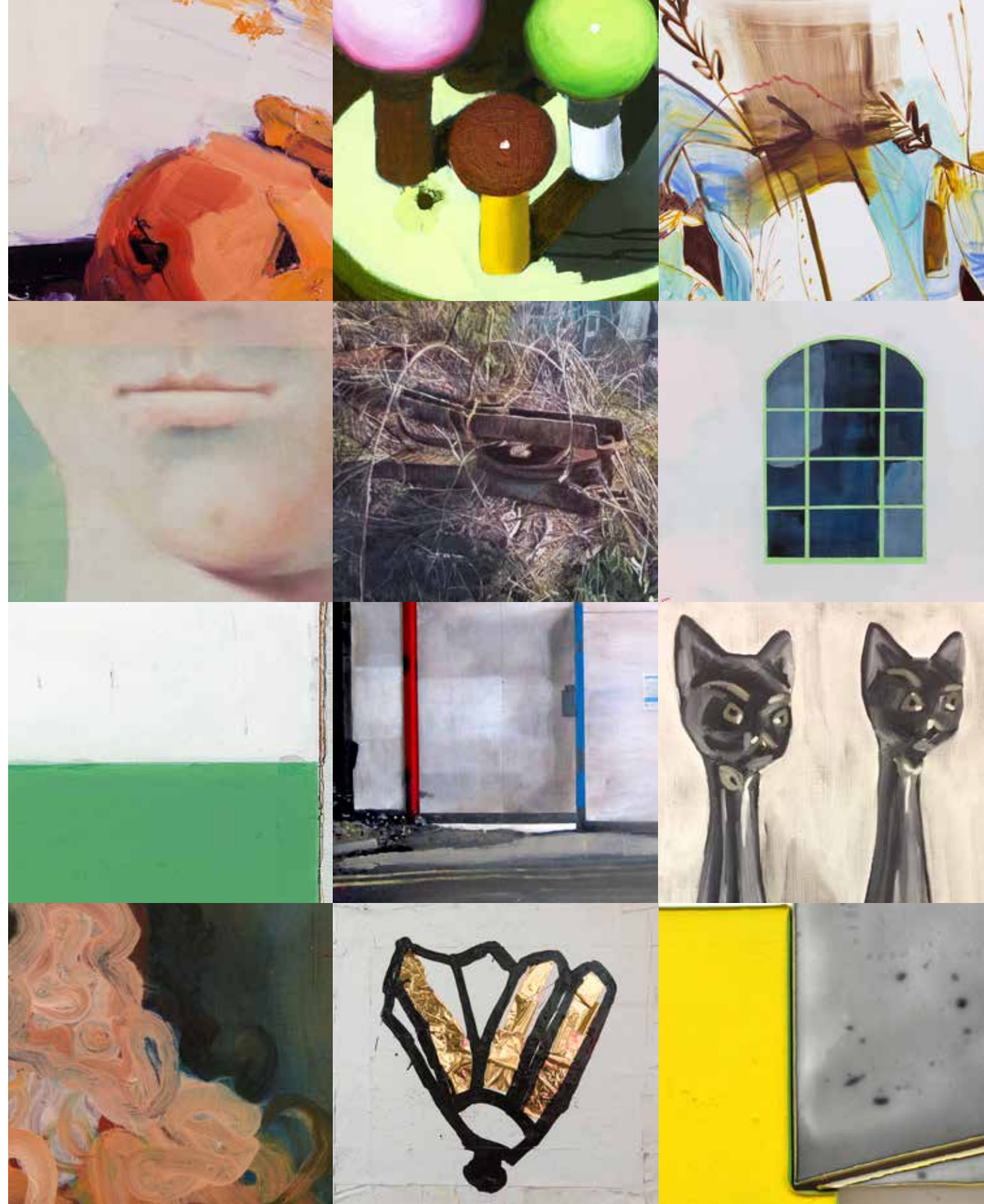
Fan  
*Canvas, paper, oil and gloss on canvas, 100cm x 110cm, 2016*

# Acknowledgements

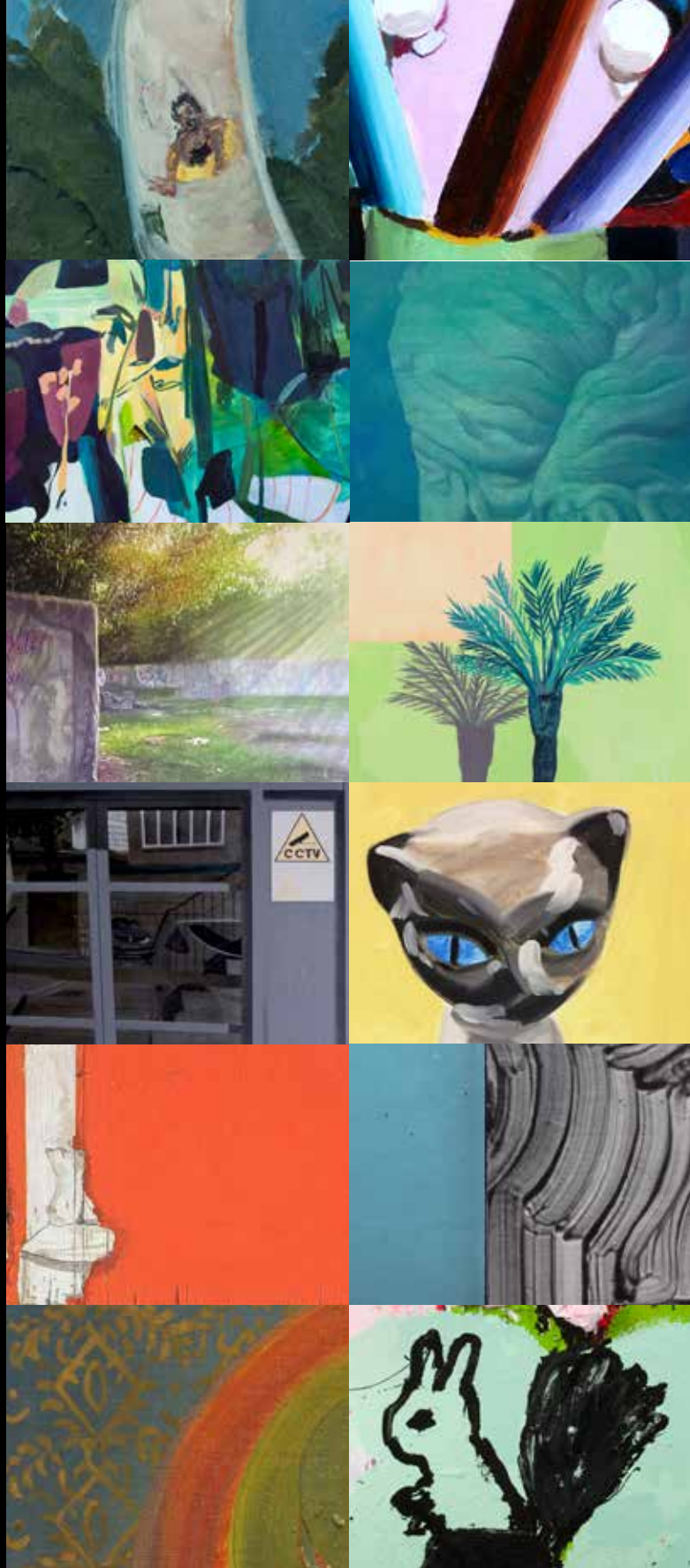
The 'Contemporary British Painting' team wish to sincerely thank our artist selectors Matthew Krishanu, Cathy Lomax, Nicholas Middleton and Julian Brown for choosing such an exciting shortlist with so much care. We also wish to thank our judges Alice Herrick, Stephen Snoddy, Jessica Litherland, Nicholas Usherwood and Elena Dranichnikova for lending a serious critical eye to the show. Sincere thanks are also offered to Mark De Novellis and Richmond Museum for hosting us, Natalie Dowse for producing beautiful posters and catalogue and Ruth Philo and Wendy Saunders for excellent work promoting the prize. Special thanks also to John Wallett for continued and dedicated website support and painting prize application processing, a huge job which cannot be underestimated.

Most of all though, we wish to thank each and every painter who has submitted their work to this year's prize, for without all the artists' participation this luminous show would not be possible.

*Robert Priseman and the Contemporary British Painting Prize 2017 organising team*







Michael Ajerman

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