

THE SUNDAY PAINTER

Tomas Harker
Emma Hart
Zearo

Independent 2025

THE SUNDAY PAINTER

The Sunday Painter is pleased to present works by Tomas Harker, Emma Hart, and Zearo at Independent 2025.

Existing on the fringes of popular culture, Tomas Harker's (b. 1990, Worksop UK, lives and works in London) practice often draws from a variety of image production and distribution systems in an attempt to make sense of a cosmic order becoming increasingly disordered. Harker's paintings capture the murkiness of modern life with a unique visual language, investigating the power dynamics that thrive on uncertainty. Despite engaging with complex social and systemic issues, his work maintains a surprising lightness—an irreverent touch softened by mythical aesthetic elements that invite deeper contemplation.

Emma Hart (b.1974, London, UK, lives and works in London, UK) uses her ceramic sculptures to perform, play out and question the power dynamics that structure a class-based society. Hart probes how our social background is transmitted through verbal signals and physical gestures, especially speech. Going beyond making vessels or pots, Hart's risky approach to working with ceramics pushes the technical limits of clay, setting it to make 'situations' in which the viewer finds themselves centre stage. Starting with the idea of manipulating 'signs' such as pointing fingers, speech bubbles and targets, Hart produces imposing sculptures that tell you where to look, where to go and forcibly put words into your mouth that may not form part of your own vocabulary.

Zearo's (b. 1996 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia) practice is firmly rooted in an autobiographical perspective shaped by his South-East Asian heritage. Addressing themes of longing, desire, memory, and masculinity, Zearo creates deeply contemplative narratives that delve into the nuanced dimensions of same-sex relationships and psychological spaces. Employing a distinctly queer lens, Zearo's works challenge the conventional norms of the male gaze, often by portraying male figures in a myriad of cognitive states.



Tomas Harker

Tomas Harker

b. 1990, Worksop, UK
lives and works in London, UK



Tomas Harker's works address the nature of meaning in conditions of mediated experience and hyperreal saturation. Over the last several years, the artist's practice has increasingly blurred the lines between fairytale and reality, often by subtly manipulating notions of the uncanny. The mythologies leaking into his recent works are not simply an exploration of fantasy, however; rather, they act as a point of entry to the abstract network of thoughts through which they come into being, suggesting that a real-world circumstance is not quite what it seems.

Existing on the fringes of popular culture, Harker's practice often draws from a variety of image production and distribution systems in an attempt to make sense of a cosmic order becoming increasingly disordered. His paintings reflect the increasing murkiness and confusion of contemporary life, whilst remaining mindful of the dynamics of power benefiting from uncertainty. In spite of their relationship to complex, significant systemic and social issues, Harker's work manages to retain a lightness of touch, a sense of irreverence, through the inclusion of mythical aesthetics. Unlike magical realism, however, his paintings act as thought experiments – providing the viewer with material by which interpretative systems can be created. They insist that we move beyond defined aesthetic language and into a mode of thinking capable of establishing connections between disparate chunks of metaphor, reference and symbolism as a means of better understanding the physical sensations capable of dominating experience, opinion and existence. Harker's works therefore venture into a new realm, where representations of the unreal are presented as symbols, or emissaries, of alternate understandings.

Tomas Harker (b. 1990, Worksop UK) lives and works in London. Selected solo exhibitions include: *The Lightness of Being*, Nicodim, Los Angeles, US (2024); *Multiple Choice Fairytale Ending*, The Sunday Painter, London, UK (2023); *I haven't been Sleeping*, Screw Gallery, Leeds, UK (2021); *Third Nature*, Copeland Gallery, London, UK (2021); *A Sea in Suspense*, Bo.lee Gallery, London, UK (2019). Group exhibitions include: *Ordinary Things*, Workplace Gallery, London, UK (2025); *Remain in Light: Tomas Harker / Laurent Proux / Robert Yarber*, Nicodim, Los Angeles, US (2025); *New Ancients*, Guts Gallery, London, UK (2023); *The Artist is Present*, Guts Gallery, London, UK (2022); *Apotrope*, Cob Gallery, London, UK (2022); *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, South London Gallery, London, UK (2021); *There's something about Painting*, Tatjana Pieters, Ghent, Belgium (2019); *Cite*, Bo.lee gallery, London, UK (2018); *Syzygy*, Leeds Arts University, Leeds, UK (2018). In 2018, Harker was awarded the Ingram Collection purchase prize.



Machines of Loving Grace, 2025
Oil on canvas
150 x 130 cm / 59 x 51 in
£12,000 (excl. VAT)







Never Let Me Go, 2025
Oil on canvas
150 x 130 cm / 59 x 51 in
£12,000 (excl. VAT)







In Heaven Everything is Fine, 2025

Oil on canvas

150 x 130 cm / 59 x 51 in

£12,000 (excl. VAT)







Descendental Meditation, 2025
Oil on canvas
150 x 130 cm / 59 x 51 in
Reserved







Emma Hart

Emma Hart

b. 1974, London, UK
lives and works in London, UK



Emma Hart makes work that actively confronts us. Her sculptures often jut out from the wall, and physically encroach on the viewer's personal space. Hart tries to manipulate the viewer, ceramic speech bubbles put words in our mouths, or protruding loud hailer shout in our faces. The power relationship between the artist, the viewer and the work is tested. Hart's work implicates the audience in acts of visual and verbal violence, making them play out the ups and downs of human relationships. Whether we adhere to habitual modes of behaviour or submit to external pressures, Hart explores what pushes us to do things. Translating these forces into sculptural gestures and visual patterns, Hart questions how our bodily actions can control others, exploring the many ways we weaponize language to impact others.

Having previously focused on group dynamics and familial relationships, Hart has recently focused on the performance of the self and the role of speech in relation to class and upbringing. As Hart puts it: 'If you come from a working class background and are trying to be some body in this middle class artworld, then you are more than likely to also feel split. Split between the world you grew up in, and the opaque artworld you've entered. Your speech acts to produce yourself, and probably gives you away.'

Emma Hart lives and works in London. In 2017 she won the Max Mara Art Prize for Women in collaboration with the Whitechapel Gallery. In 2015 she was awarded a Paul Hamlyn Foundation award for Visual Art. In 2020 Hart was commissioned to realise her first permanent sculpture for the public entrance of the UCL East, Pool Street West building, on Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park. Recent exhibitions include *Club Together*, Modern Art Oxford, UK, 2024; *Big Time*, Hospitalfield, Scotland, UK, 2023 and *Frieze Sculpture 2022*; *Big Mouth*, Barakat Contemporary, Seoul, South Korea 2021; *Be Some Body*, The Sunday Painter, London, UK 2020; *Banger*, The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh 2018; *Mamma Mia!*, Whitechapel Gallery and the Collezione Maramotti, Italy 2017; *Commercial Breakz*, Frieze Art Fair, London 2017; *Love Life with Jonathan Baldock*, Peer, London, The Grundy Gallery, Blackpool and De Le Warr Pavilion, Bexhill 2016, 2017; *Giving It All That*, Folkestone Triennial 2014; *Dirty Looks*, Camden Arts Centre 2013.



Let Down, Your Hair, 2025
Ceramic
35 x 105 x 25 cm / 14 x 41 x 10 in
£14,000 (excl. VAT)







Cut Cut Cut, 2025
Ceramic
35 x 105 x 25 cm / 14 x 41 x 10 in
£14,000 (excl. VAT)







In Your Cross Hair, 2025
Ceramic
35 x 105 x 25 cm / 14 x 41 x 10 in
£14,000 (excl. VAT)





Fix Your Face (pink and light blue), 2025

Ceramic

75 x 90 x 9 cm / 29.5 x 35.5 x 3.5 in

£16,000 (excl. VAT)







Fix Your Face (yellow and orange), 2025
Ceramic
70 x 85 x 9 cm / 29.5 x 33.5 x 3.5 in)
£16,000 (excl. VAT)





Zearo

Zearo

b. 1996, Kuala Lumpur, MA
lives and works in London, UK



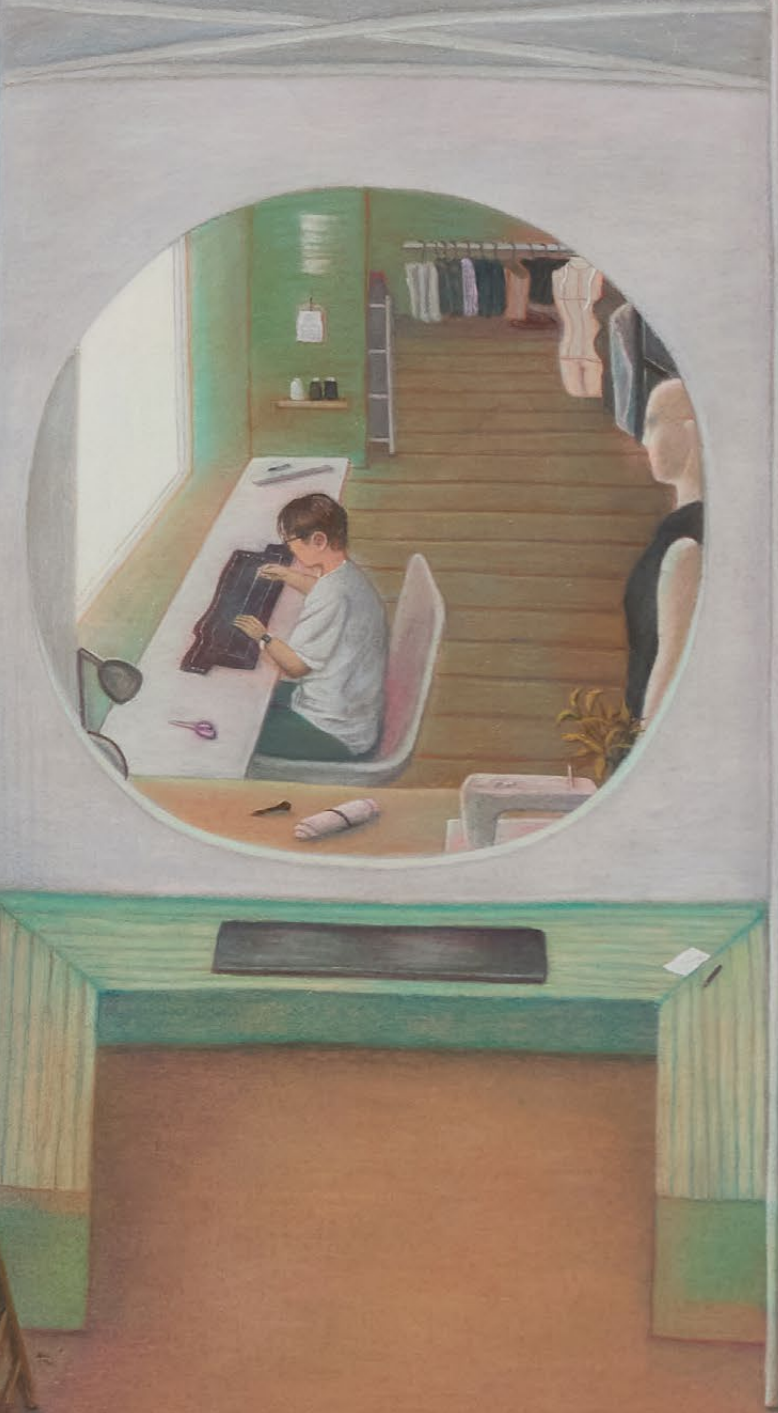
Zearo's practice is firmly rooted in an autobiographical perspective shaped by his South-East Asian heritage. Addressing themes of longing, desire, memory, and masculinity, Zearo creates deeply contemplative narratives that delve into the nuanced dimensions of same-sex relationships and psychological spaces. Employing a distinctly queer lens, Zearo's works challenge the conventional norms of the male gaze, often by portraying male figures in a myriad of cognitive states— some immersed in laughter, others in serene repose, and many simply caught in the act of existing. These recurring male characters serve as poignant reflections, with some delving into the intricate psychological aspects of self-confrontation and others tenderly capturing the lingering presence of past partners or friends who have left an indelible mark on the artist's life. Recurring motifs such as windows and doorways hint at the universal fear of solitude, abandonment and departure. Through the incorporation of both fetishised and everyday objects, the artist attempts to make visible a deeper understanding of same-sex narratives, whilst drawing attention to the symbolic value objects acquire over time.

Zearo's ongoing investigation of space transcends conventional architectural boundaries. Influenced by mediaeval space composition and traditional Chinese hand scroll painting, multiple viewpoints encourage the viewer's eyes to wander through each meticulously detailed scene. Drawing inspiration from traditional Chinese art practices in particular, the artist goes beyond portraying logistical structures – aiming instead to capture the inner emotional and psychological landscapes associated with a particular space. The deliberate choice of chalk pastels in Zearo's work alludes to the pixel, with each stroke transcending its individuality to collectively build a visual narrative that surpasses the mere sum of its parts. The fragility inherent in these materials serve as a metaphor for the transient nature of the human experience.

Zearo was born in 1996 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He currently lives and works in London, UK. In 2023, he obtained his MA in painting from the Royal College of Art. Recent solo exhibitions include: *If I pass right by here*, Linseed Projects, Shanghai, China 2024; *in dust time*, The Sunday Painter, London, UK 2023. Recent group exhibitions include: *Tangible*, Subtitle Labs, London, UK 2024; *X Collection 202*, Portrait of a Man', X Museum, Beijing, China, 2024; *ART SG*, Hive Center for Contemporary Art, Marina Bay Sands, Singapore (2024); *YA!*, 3812 Gallery, London, UK (2023); *Across & Over*, HSBC HQ, London, UK (2023); *Tightrope*, The Bomb Factory ArtFoundation, London, UK (2023); *Wild is the Wind*, Hew Hood Gallery, London, UK (2023); *Royal College of Art Degree Show*, Truman Brewery, London, UK(2023); *Ruth Borchard Self Portrait Prize* (2023); *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, South London Gallery, London, UK (2022); *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, Ferens Art Gallery, Hull, UK (2022); *Come One Come All*, The Function Suite, London, UK (2022); *RAW-RCA WIP Show*, Soho Revue, London, UK (2021); *Lingua Franker- A Shiftiest Show*, HOXTON 253, London, UK (2021); *Set In Motion*, G13 Gallery, Selangor, Malaysia (2019); *Got It For Cheap*, Dateline Gallery, Colorado, USA (2019); *Art Salon*, Artesque, Kuala



Matters beyond the Threshold, 2025
pigment, ink & moth on washi
140 x 300 cm / 55 x 118 in (framed)
£18,000 (excl. VAT)





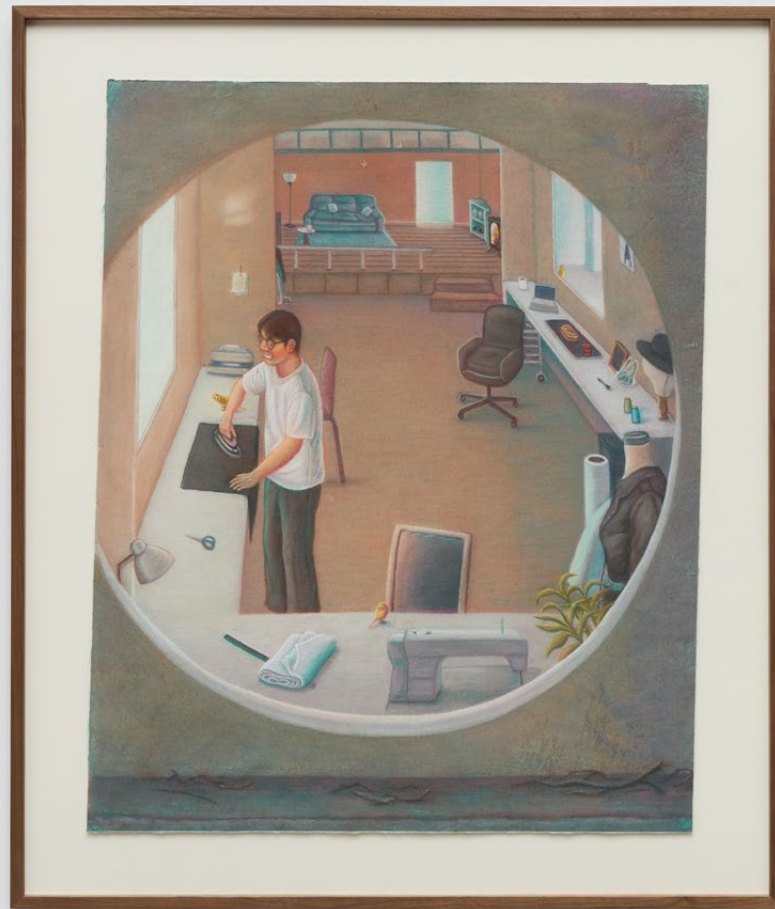


Chirping for a Toile (iii), 2024
pigment on washi
110 x 160 cm / 43 x 63 in (framed)
£10,000 (excl. VAT)



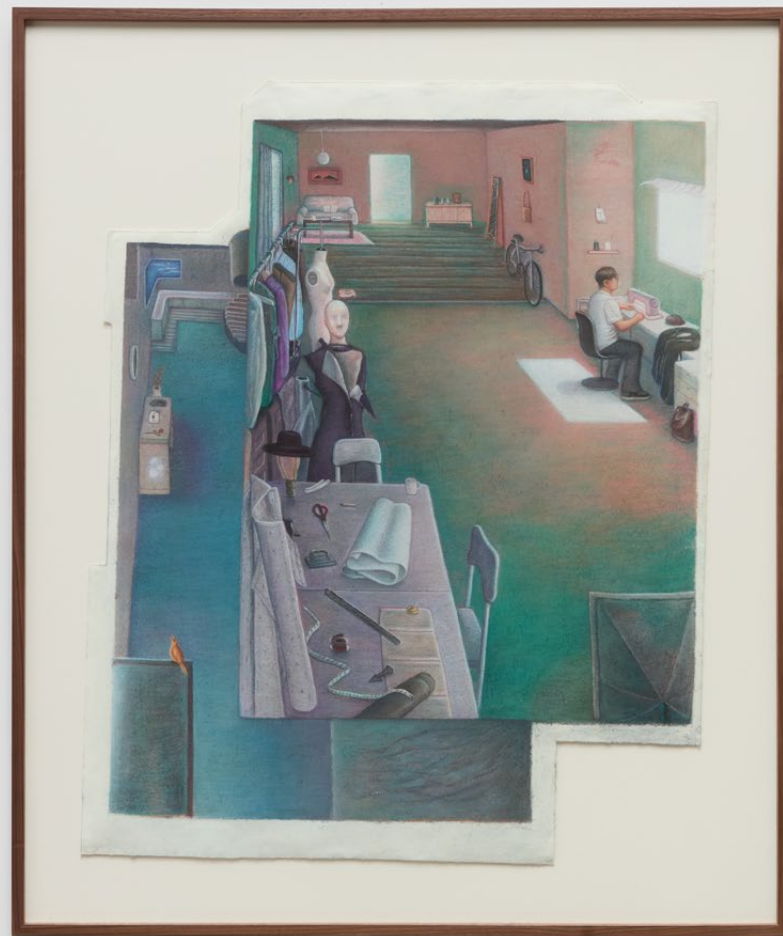






Chirping for the toile (iv), 2025
pigment and ink on washi
85 x 102 cm / 33.5 x 40 in (framed)
£7,500 (excl. VAT)





Chirping for the toile (iii), 2025
pigment and ink on washi
110 x 90 cm / 43 x 35.5 in (framed)
£7,500 (excl. VAT)





Chirping for a Toile (i), 2024
pigment on washi
56 x 75 cm / 22 x 29.5 in (framed)
£4,000 (excl. VAT)

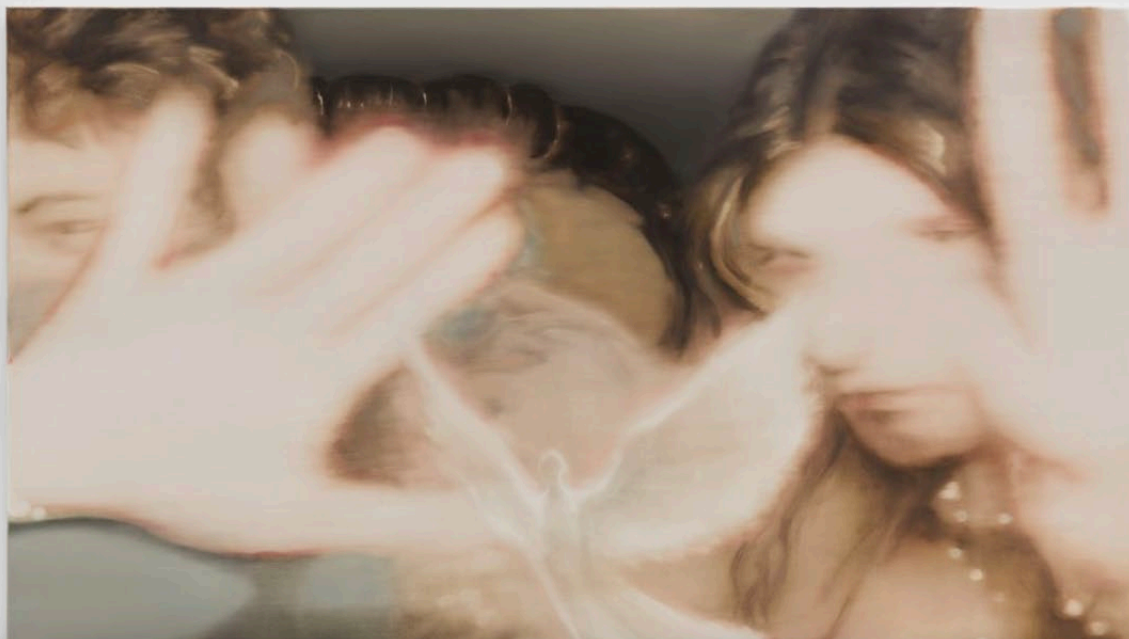


Pathing Hour by the Couturier, 2024
pigment on washi
56 x 75 cm / 22 x 29.5 in (framed)
£4,000 (excl. VAT)

TOMAS HARKER

Selected Press

THE SUNDAY PAINTER



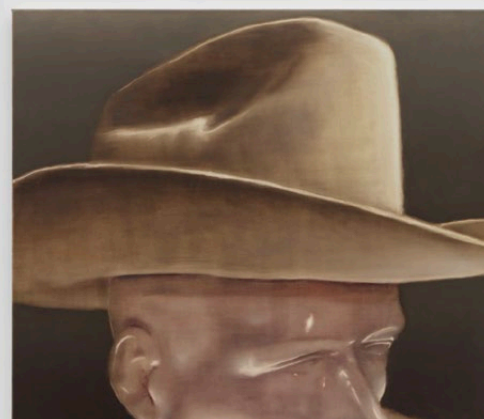
Tomas Harker's paintings don't just explore the blurred line between fantasy and reality – they challenge it. In his latest exhibition, *The Lightness of Being*, Harker weaves together cultural references, painterly textures, and philosophical musings to confront the uncertain terrain of contemporary life. In this interview, he unpacks the hidden forces shaping our world, the evolving nature of the self, and how his art becomes a visual commentary on a world in free fall.

hube: Your paintings often blur the lines between fairytale and reality, particularly in works like *Multiple Choice Fairytale Ending*. How do you think this ambiguity resonates with the uncertainties of contemporary life?

Tomas Harker: To me, this resonates because superstitions about what is real and what is not have moved from the fringe to the mainstream. The hyper-normal turmoil of distinguishing between 'the real world' and 'the fake world' is now a condition of contemporary life.

Behind the every day, it can seem as though a hidden logic is operating on a higher ontological level. It could be the invisible hand of economics, vast flows of information, Kafkaesque bureaucracies, or something with more benevolent omnipotence. Fairy tales and folklore are often cautionary, giving physical form to unseen forces.

h: In your recent exhibition *The Lightness of Being*, you explore the relationship between the self and the world through a veil-like softness in your compositions. How did you develop this idea of the painting as a 'mediator' between reality and belief?



ART

A DISORDERED WORLD

hube



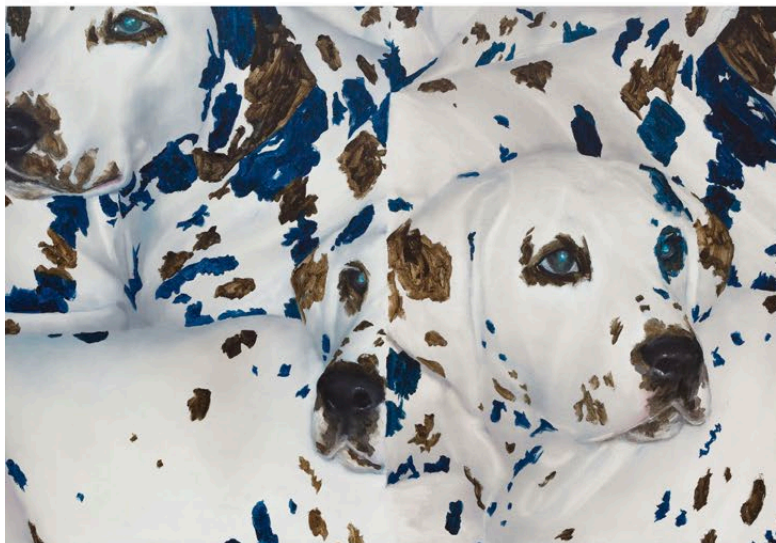
So Much For Our Happy Endings

So Much For Our Happy Endings

15.05.2023

Werewolves are the embodiment of untamed energies. Raw, primitive urges. On-screen human-to-werewolf transformations, on the other hand, are the paragon of high camp, clichéd spectacle. The latter informs Tom Harker's 'Simulacrum of the Self': a transformation sourced from 1981's [An American Werewolf in London](#) overlays a woman in a flowing veil. Like werewolves, veils can be somewhat hackneyed – at least we've been veiling since ancient Mesopotamia. Everywhere in Harker's visual language, there are haywire signifiers – things meaning too much or failing to mean enough. They range from *mise en abîme* (a painting of 'Fake Balenciagas') to a portrait with a [Getty images watermark](#) to the kind of [fun tableaux](#) you'd use as a prompt on an AI image generator to test its limits: a picture of Princess Diana looking at a skull-shaped bong holding a clutch of sunflowers with Van Gogh's face on them.

"as if the tarantulas and gimps snogging weren't enough don't-look-can't-look-away, there are the actual car crashes"



Rich Implied Terror: On Tomas Harker's "Multiple Choice Fairytale Ending"

Artwork: Tomas Harker / I'll be your Mirror, 2022. Written by Max L. Feldman.



Running through a peculiar late winter period (February 17th – April 1st) in Britain when nothing works and underpaid transport workers, nurses, teachers, university staff, junior doctors, and others were on strike, painter [Tomas Harker](#) gives us "Multiple Choice Fairytale Ending" (all works 2022) at [The Sunday Painter](#), London. Upstairs we get dreamlike surrealism with strange but not always unpleasant images of fairies in wine glasses, lobsters awaiting execution, and dogs. Downstairs, despite the crisp light streaming into the space from South Lambeth Road above, there are terrible frights on display: growling werewolves, cascading spiders, impish demons.

EMMA HART

Selected Press

THE SUNDAY PAINTER

The Guardian

UK ▾

Class action: the show pricking the bubble of art snobbery

Poor Things is an exhibition that challenges the stubborn perception of art as a purely middle-class pursuit

On the occasion of an exhibition opening, there is a short and rather predictable list of gifts that an artist might expect to receive. Lavish bouquets and extravagant champagne are usual - Tupperware boxes filled with homemade sandwiches are, however, rather less so. Yet, at the launch of her first exhibition, this is exactly what [Emma Hart](#)'s mother gave her.

Emma Hart

Spoiler (Blue/Yellow), 2021

"I want to make noisy, in-your-face sculptures - but how can a sculpture be too loud?" Hart asks. "How can a sculpture feel awkward, or feel like it's made a fool of itself? My four, large, ceramic megaphones might act as gatekeepers to the exhibition but, like me, they are prone to loudly saying the wrong thing."

Poor Things is at [Fruitmarket](#), Edinburgh, to 21 May.



Photograph: Courtesy of Emma Hart/The Sunday Painter

THE

LIST

SEPTEMBER 2023 | ISSUE 774

LIST.CO.UK | FREE

+

2-22

CRYPTIC

DICKSON MBI

KEN LOACH

DEVENDRA BANHART

DOON MACKICHAN

PAST LIVES

TIM VINE

EMMA HART

NATION OF LANGUAGE

MATTHEW BOURNE

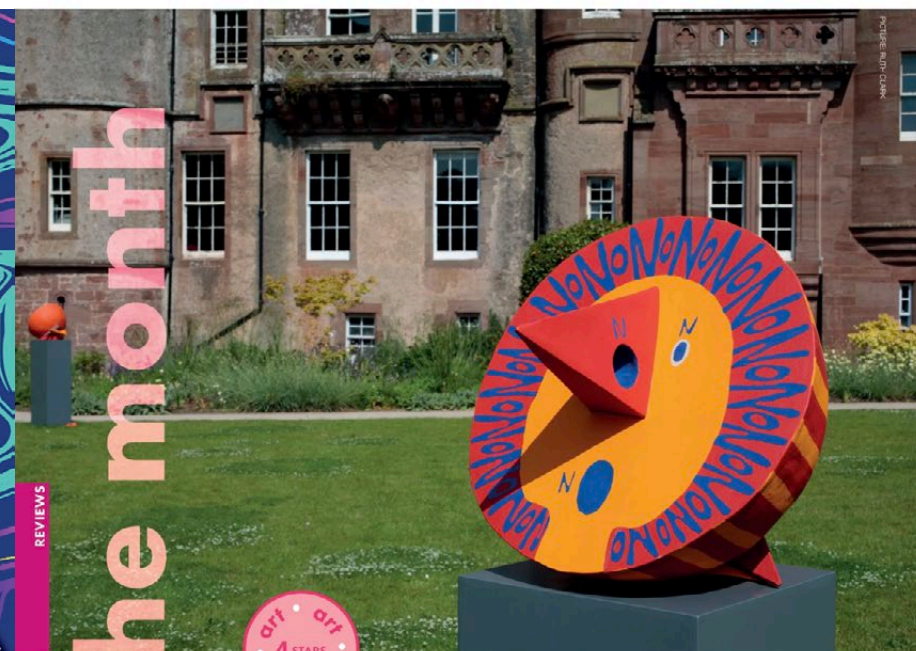
PSYCHEDELIA

Take a trip with the new pioneers

Student Guide

FREE INSIDE

art | books | comedy | dance | drink | eat | film | kids | music | podcasts | shop | theatre | tv



REVIEWS

art of the month



Emma Hart's colourful sculptures confront the subjects of class and erosion of our free time. Greg Thomas praises the artist's spirit of dissent that will leave visitors wanting more

Emma Hart's sculptures are known for making a racket; or rather, for seeming like they ought to. Bringing the surreal, cartoonish style of Philip Guston into three-dimensional space, she often creates works that jut out into galleries at head height, their bold, simple, colourful forms suggesting mouths, loudspeakers, speech bubbles or other graphic markers of vocal noise.

All this hullabaloo is to do with class for Hart, who last year co-curated group show *Poor Things* at Edinburgh's Fruitmarket, exploring themes of working-class identity in contemporary art. In a recent artist's statement she notes, 'if you come from a working-class background and are trying to be somebody in this middle-class artworld... your speech acts to produce yourself, and probably gives you away.' Unbowed, her sculptures seek out confrontations with the viewer, opting them into awkward interactions, making them complicit in uneven power dynamics, or sometimes just inviting them to join in the din.

Hart's current exhibition at Hospitalfield arts centre in Arbroath consists of four gurning, cheering and crying faces dispersed across the neat back lawn. Establishing a nicely irreverent contrast with the Scots-baronial pile before them, they nonetheless pay homage to their built environment, in particular to the four sundials protruding from the red sandstone tower above. Hart's faces are sundials too: big,

shiny, bowl-shaped ceramic ones, their shadow-casting gnomons repurposed as pointy noses that jut upwards at the viewer from waist-height plinths.

The four works ('Out Of Time', 'Borrowed Time', 'No Time' and 'Nice Time') pass wry comment on the compartmentalisation and incremental chipping away of free time in modern consumer culture, and the ways in which we try to steal it back. 'Out Of Time' holds its fingers to its O-shaped mouth in panic, while for 'No Time', the hours and minutes around the clockface's edge are replaced by a long, circular litany of nos: wherever the shadow points, time is up. 'Borrowed Time' is two-faced, the opposing sides of its visages competing to soak up the sunlight, like ego-ridden artworld aficionados. 'Nice Time', meanwhile, consists of an acid-house smiley face surrounded by a psychedelic mane of multi-coloured tongues. Speaking to Hart's interest in rave culture, it alludes to both the liberatory potential and drab escapism of drug use and nightlife.

Class is the great taboo of our current, identity-obsessed arts scene. Hart confronts the subject here with humour and a jostling spirit of dissent. The visitor might only wish there were more to see, more faces to read.

Emma Hart: *Big Time*, Hospitalfield, Arbroath, until Thursday 31 October.

Arts // Sculpture

WHY I'M DREAMING UP FEATS OF CLAY

By EMMA HART

When I left school, I didn't intend to become an artist. I come from a working-class background where art was not a priority. I went to college to learn about photography, with the intention of being a wedding photographer, but I ended up becoming an artist.

I have never been able to get over that being an artist makes me feel ridiculous. Spending time making something and then sticking it in the middle of a room and say, "Oh everyone, look at this" always makes me feel weird. In truth, I wanted to be an artist because I thought it would mean I could get up late and I didn't have to work – I was wrong! So I at least always try to have a good time whilst working.

I wrote a note for above my desk in my studio, that says the problem with a lot of art or when art is boring, is because maybe the artist thinks what they're doing is more important than the people looking at it. So it's vital for me to use art to create a situation that has some energy; people can come and look at it for three seconds or they could look at it for three hours, but they remember the

experience. I think this is a particularly good thing that sculpture does, it means that if nothing else you physically encounter it – you have to do something as a viewer, even if just walk round it.

I want to make sculptures that actively confront the person looking at them. I want my work to come for the viewer, to lurch at the viewer, to jut out from the wall or physically encroach on your personal space. I want to manipulate the viewer – ceramic speech bubbles put words in your mouths, or protruding megaphones shout in your face. Who is in charge here? Me the artist, you the viewer or the work?

Since 2012 I have been working with ceramics. I used to make videos. Sitting down editing on the computer, waiting for something to render, was boring. A particular ambition of my work is to scale up ceramics that go beyond being a vessel, beyond objects and to try



I'm trying to get the material to do something it doesn't want to do



and create situations, so the works are producing a reality not describing one. Working with clay is a challenge. I have had to learn so much and try out so many things the clay keeps me constantly busy. It's a material nearly everyone touches everyday, we all drink from mugs, or eat from ceramic plates. Everyone knows it might smash, yet everyone uses it. There's no mystery to it.

I think that the problem with clay is that all it wants to be is a pot. It's really, really, really good at being a pot (museums are filled with great pots). What it doesn't want to be is a fence, for example. Clay does not want to be a big fence, so to make it a fence I have to get in a fight with it. I have an idea of what I want it to look like and then I have to go to war. And I do enjoy it. I'm having a good time when I'm making it. It's a negotiation between me and the limits of the material. I'm trying to get it to do something it doesn't want to do.

I love encountering sculpture outdoors. It becomes much more apparent that the work occupies the same ground as the viewer – creating a more intimate, one to one acknowledgment of both work and audience being in the world. Placing artwork outside offers different



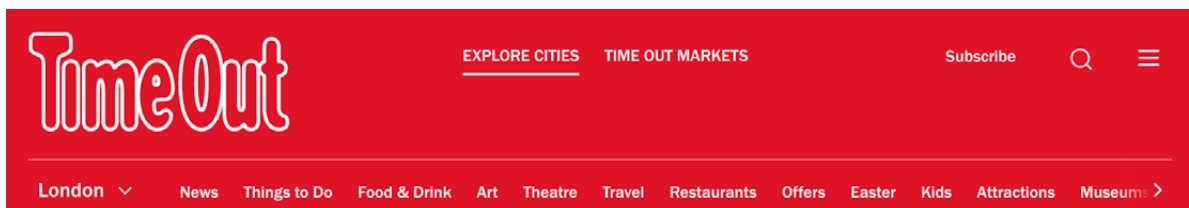
Emma Hart and her ceramic sundials (clockwise from above) Borrowed Time, Out of Time and Big Time at Hospitalfield. Pictures: Neil Hanna

perspectives. The ability to work outside to be viewed in the round, to be framed by the world, and then physically zoomed in on provokes me to make sculptures that animate and alter how you feel as you walk around them. This has been the intention for my work at Art Night in Dundee and also with my installation BIG TIME on the lawn at Hospitalfield in Arbroath.

BIG TIME is a series of radiant ceramic sundials that take up space and take on time when I reinvent the sundial as a

face and nose. My sculptures use a lot of visual punning. It's like hunting for treasure, finding things that look like other things is like finding a nugget of gold. Each anthropomorphic sundial is under a different time pressure – some taking way too much, whilst others never have enough. The vivid orange Out of Time counts down on its fingers and screams out in panic whilst the telling shadow always points to "NO o'clock" for the up against it No Time. Meanwhile, psychedelic Nice Time blossoms, blooms and flowers up, beaming in the sun. My sundials have been pushed around in clay and pressed and stretched for time. Given time, these sculptures become a more complex examination of how our bodies, physically and emotionally, experience time and space. I'm very happy that my sundials get a place in the Hospitalfield sun. It's been a breath of fresh air to come up to Arbroath and I'm looking forward to coming back for some more good time."

Emma Hart is an artist based in London. In 2015-17 she won the Max Mara Art Prize for Women. Her installation BIG TIME is at Hospitalfield, Arbroath, until 31st October



Frieze Sculpture is the best outdoor art to see in London right now

Five artworks to see at Frieze Sculpture 2022

Emma Hart, 'Big Time', 2022

Sundials are a genuinely pointless idea in this damp, grey, moss-choked country – when do we ever get to see the sun?! But that hasn't stopped the brilliant Emma Hart from making a whole bunch of them for Regents Park this autumn. And guess what, they're gorgeous, funny and anthropomorphic, and they add some much needed colour to Regents Park.



THE ART NEWSPAPER

Nocturnal festival Art Night takes a trip to Dundee, with a rave in a car park and a show in wheelbarrows

When inviting artists to take part in Art Night, Nisbet revealed that she drew an analogy with house parties and the way in which different activities take place in different rooms: as she puts it, “dancing in the living room, having a meaningful conversation in the kitchen, meeting an old friend in the toilet line, crying with a pal in the garden, or snogging on the stairs.” Doubtless all of the above took place across Dundee last Saturday night, but for this writer the house party dance action vibe was most abundantly provided by Emma Hart’s *BIG UP*, a celebration of raving that took place not in a living room but in Greenmarket multistorey car park. Here, up on the top floor overlooking the River Tay, Hart and her DJ sister Emma played an epic four hour set where we all made our moves amongst her painted cardboard sculptures of giant raised hands and gave thanks to being brought together so joyously in the name of art.



Revelers at Emma Hart’s *BIG UP*, a celebration of raving in Greenmarket multistorey car park
Photo: Tom Nolan



THE ART NEWSPAPER

How the Beano encouraged generations of artists to break the rules

We asked eight artists about the comic's influence ahead of a new exhibition exploring the publication's history and featuring contemporary art with that "Beano sensibility"

Emma Hart

"The *Beano* was probably the first thing that no one told me to read. My mum hadn't read it and didn't read it, and so she didn't have an opinion on it. Because of this, it created a kind of unique space for me growing up that was just for me. It didn't bring with it any pressure or expectation and I loved the stripes, the bold colours and the punk aesthetics. The *Beano* was my first introduction to something being self-referential; I vividly remember characters threatening to punch each other into next week's comic. I think that opened up a new world of creative possibilities for me."



Emma Hart

THE WORLD OF INTERIORS

OCTOBER 2020

IMPECCABLE MANOR Jasper Conran
finds timeworn perfection in Dorset



BAUHAUS POWERHOUSE Gropius and
Breuer's Modernist masterwork in Pittsburgh
DECORATION SPECIAL



Emma Hart

THE SUNDAY PAINTER South Lambeth Rd, London SW8

A gallery provides a still and silent experience, a serene encounter with objects in an empty room. Somebody should tell Emma Hart. For this artist, the gallery is a stage for a cast of sculptures – talking birds, disembodied tongues, chatty speech bubbles – that engages the viewer in a raucous conversation.

Although Hart used to ply her trade as a photographer, she had been feeling increasingly frustrated with the medium when she came across the work of Oxford philosopher JL Austin (1911–60). Language, argued Austin, is not always a representation of the world, or a 'propositional truth', but offers instead a platform for speakers to *perform*. Austin's notion of a 'performative utterance' provoked in Hart a desire to make work that isn't a flat depiction of everyday experience but conjures it anew, with all its clamour and untidiness. She put aside photography for a dynamic, living art.

Since this Austin-prompted insight a decade ago, Hart has been on a roll. Her first sculptural installation, *To Do* (2011) at London's Matt's Gallery, featured half-camera, half-bird hybrids on tripods, all singing and squawking. A year later, a crucial encounter with the artist Jonathan Baldock introduced Hart to the possibilities of ceramics. Unveiling her new medium at Camden Art Centre, the 2013 exhibition *Dirty Looks* created a cacophony of sound, sculpture and image, including those long ceramic tongues.

And the presence of tongues tells us how important language is to the artist: class and cultural codes, and the slipperiness of meaning, everywhere from quiet museums to domestic settings. When she won the sixth Max Mara Art Prize for Women in 2016, the resulting exhibition at the Whitechapel Gallery featured pendant lamps in the shape of comic-book speech bubbles and ceiling fans with cutlery for blades. *Banger* at Edinburgh's Fruitmarket (2018–19) introduced a new vocabulary of car windshields shattered into jagged abstraction, tunnels reflected in rear-view mirrors and spiralling steering wheels: a wacky road trip in elaborate ceramics.

Puns, both visual and linguistic, feature prominently in Hart's work. At the Sunday Painter this autumn, a group of speech-bubble sculptures double as cartoonish portraits: the word 'EXTRA' fills one bubble, and the X becomes a closed eye, the bubble's tail a nose, and the crimson A a downturned mouth. Other sculptures will be glazed with a lustrous, reflective surface, a new technique for the artist, and bring to mind round-headed characters gazing into hand-held mirrors. A similar mood enlivens works that resemble long, skinny arms holding up table-tennis paddles. Or are they more mirrors – or even shields? A group of megaphones, meanwhile, feature blank faces in the mouths of the horns. Everywhere Hart's sculptures call out to the viewer, inviting us to reflect on the objects we use to amplify our voices or protect our egos. **EMMA HART: BE SOME BODY TUNES** 1 Oct–5 Dec, Wed–Sat 12–6 **CRAIG BURNETT** is the author of *Philip Guston: The Studio* (Afterall)

EXHIBITION diary



From top: *All Hall*, 2020, ceramic; *It Was My Way or the Highway* (Right-hand drive), 2018, ceramic and plastic; *Extra*, 2020, ceramic; *Green Light*, 2018, ceramic, perspex and steel, installation at Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh, 2018

ZEARO

Selected Press

THE SUNDAY PAINTER

Prejudice Exhibition Review

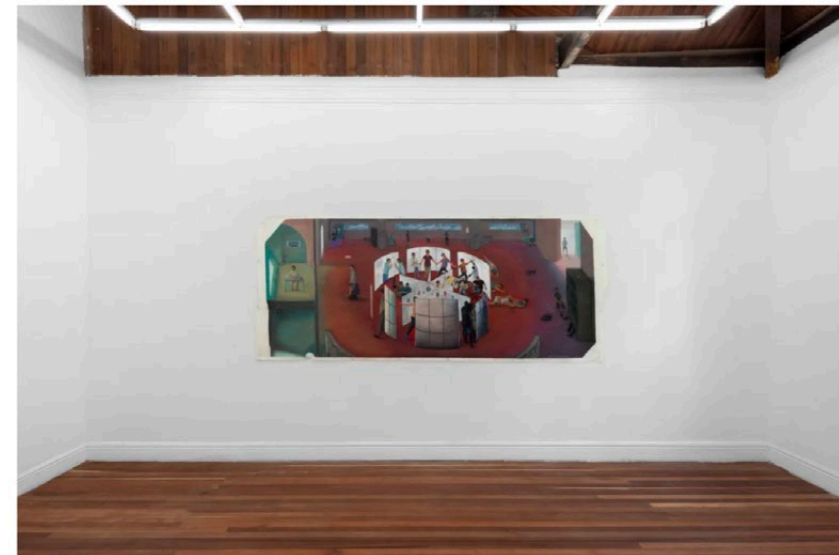
Deja vu dream 在睡梦中，我们活着；
一旦醒来，我们就开始死亡。

By Qiao Hongkai

——卡尔·福特拉奇 Karl Fortlage



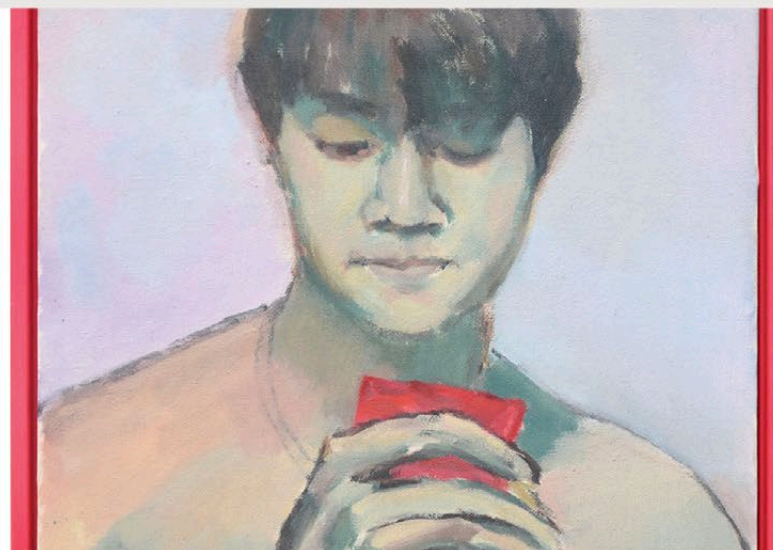
Every viewer who stops in front of Zearo's paintings will feel a kind of familiar strangeness, which reminds people of the warm sadness when they accidentally encounter some familiar scenes (perhaps in dreams). On the surface, the picture is composed of several puzzle-like narrative units, each of which comes from familiar events in daily life. The meaning of the characters' behaviors and the combination of objects does not hinder the reading of the picture. These pictures, which are as quiet and calm as the characters in the picture, will make people feel like they are watching a picture book story. But when the viewer tries to further understand the narrative logic of the picture, this attempt is immediately resisted by the picture itself: some characters are walking towards an empty door, and there is a heavenly light behind the door ("The Second Transaction"); some characters are having sex ("A Game, a Dream"); some characters exist in the form of blurred outlines, or directly become unclear, ghostly silhouettes in the picture ("Arrival, Dream of Flowers"; "Promise of the Cape"). The expressions of these characters are filled with a strange sadness, which envelops the space and objects in the picture – as well as the viewer in front of the picture.



Zearo, "If I Passed By Here" exhibition view

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Three new artworks from NC22 enter the Government Art Collection



Since 2018, the Government Art Collection has been acquiring works of art from emerging and early career artists from formal education and alternative learning programmes through New Contemporaries.

Zearo centres his work on lived experience by exploring ideas of longing, memory, desire, male gaze, and masculinity through oil paint and pastel. Influenced by his Southeast Asian background where same-sex desires are obscured, he attempts to create a space where the same-sex figures are approachable, a space where care and secrecy are being represented.

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12 amazing artists you have to see at Bloomberg New Contemporaries 2022

The country's best young artists, all in one place

Zearo's super simple portraits, some on homemade paper, are oddly intimate. They feel private, like you're being let in on a secret just by looking at them.

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ZEARO

Zearo's practice takes on an autobiographical perspective to explore his relationship to the male figures. Influenced by his Southeast Asian background where same-sex desires are obscured, he centres on lived experience by exploring ideas of longing, memory, desire, male gaze, and masculinity through the medium of oil paint and pastel. Through this direction, he attempts to create a space where the same-sex figures are approachable, a space where the care and the secrecy are being represented.

Sam Moore: The self is rarely shown unguarded in this work; do you think that vulnerability is more difficult to capture when the self is mediated, via technology for instance?

Zearo: It is more the psychological aspects of self-confrontation in the process of painting that act on the presence of vulnerabilities in the work. Particularly in *Self Portrait with Kev*, there are elements of youthfulness, appearance and recognition of iconography that takes place inwardly that influenced how I view and react to my being at that particular moment, to vulnerabilities in the self – mediated during this long and contemplative process of painting and gazing at the self. Many of the entanglements and conflicts with representation are then reconciled and reconsidered through these dialogues, which result in multiple adjustments and decisions on what to conceal and capture.