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Art

The Artsy Vanguard 2022: Anthony Cudahy

John Belknap

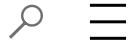
Nov 15, 2022 12:16PM



Anthony Cudahy is that peculiar thing, a serious painter who's also an unpredictable storyteller. Informed by a [New Narrative](#) ideas — disintegration, [interiority](#), [interiority](#) — Cudahy's images are vaporous vignettes of washed-out figures who have turned away from worldliness.

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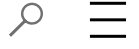


gives a modest look of disgust at whatever meets her gaze beyond the canvas's right edge. Other works display the complications of belonging, kinship, and colonialism as well as the afflictions of displacement, as figures move from the indoors to outdoors and back again. His visual storytelling points to all kinds of queer culture keywords. There's the tenderheartedness of self-care and compassion as well as the tyranny of rehabilitation and reclamation. He limns tough stuff.



Portrait of Anthony Cudahy in his studio, 2021. Photo by [Skip to Main Content](#) ine. Courtesy of Hales New York.

Anthony Cudahy
Lily and mirror with Apocalypse Tapestry, 2022
GRIMM

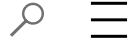
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The artist's paintings are snug in the company of his contemporaries [Salman Toor](#), [Janiva Ellis](#), [Genieve Figgis](#), and [Cy Gavin](#). Each one dreams up half-present figures — apparitions, really — floating about on the brink of troubled times. Cudahy is a reliable narrator of the era. He portrays Americans as wads of smoke and gas, grappling with losing object permanence of the world.

Of his recent journey into therapy for obsessive-compulsive disorder, he shares: “Actually a lot of what I feel like my work has been about over the years, fear and precariousness — we’ve been doing exposure therapy to stop avoiding the discomfort caused by uncertainty.”

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Anthony Cudahy, installation view of “a pearl caught between my teeth” at GRIMM, 2022. Photo by LNDW Studio. Courtesy of the artist and GRIMM.

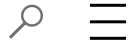
Cudahy has a keen, if somewhat aching, sentimentality for what an American painting can and cannot address. Human frailty, restlessness, and environmental interfusion reign. As for any zeitgeist-specific imagery, “I really can’t think of any pop culture references that are in my current work,” he said. “Even getting the iPhone in a few paintings was a big deal for me. As some of the paintings get more and more specific and descriptive of place; it’s not something I want to avoid. I guess the emotional tenor of the work and the shorthand I’ve developed over the years isn’t very pop.”

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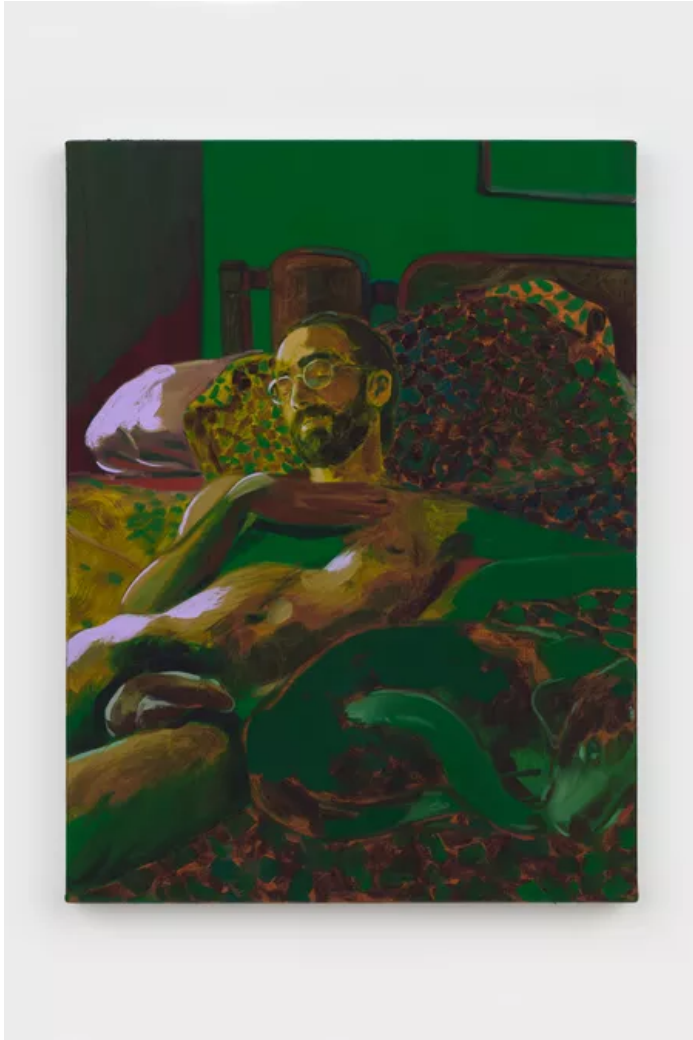
...telling that the artist grew up in hurricane-heavy Fort Myers, Florida. If the threat of destruction blowing through your

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things come and go as they please.

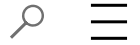


Anthony Cudahy
Ian asleep (Seneca watching), 2022
Hales Gallery



Anthony Cudahy
Us (with Jacob's Ladder, Apocalypse Tree, Lion...
1969 Gallery
Sold

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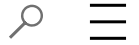
Aptly, Cudahy is an archivist of photographs, poems, and other particles of the past. All appear throughout his work. There's references to the deadly 1977 bathhouse fire in Manhattan; lyrics to the Kate Bush song "A Coral Room"; Helen Frankenthaler's symbolic 1957 painting *Jacob's Ladder*; gay Tumblr (RIP); Pompeii wall art; iconography lifted from Bruegel and Bosch; and the rest of the so-called Queer Archive. His most recent show, "a pearl caught between my teeth," mounted at GRIMM in Amsterdam, quotes a line from a Paul Legault poem called "Flowers, Duh." The poem seems to ask what it would mean if culture was really nature all along.

The artist eventually fled the Florida wetlands for New York City. There, he graduated with a BFA from Pratt Institute in 2011 and an MFA from Hunter College in 2020. Cudahy's first solo show, "Heaven Inside," was held at Uprise Art Outpost in Chelsea in 2014. In the years prior, he had shared similar work of washed-out figures: upstate city-dwellers; his husband; dogs, snakes, and insects. They appear with beady eyes, smudged noses, clubbed feet, and

[Skip to Main Content](#) Sunburns cover the bodies of bearded boys in backyard gardens. Rashes glow on the skin of bent-over women at work. Their skin's surface swims and swerves; it expands with

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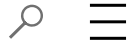
Anthony Cudahy, installation view of “Coral Room” at Hales Gallery, 2021. Photo by JSP Art Photography. Courtesy of the artist and Hales Gallery, London and New York.

“I often try to have more oddball moments with clothing, for a lack of a better term,” Cudahy said. “Socks still on or like a shirt on with nothing else – because those kinds of moments feel more casual [and] real to me.”

These figures have been shown in group shows at venues such as Deli Gallery and Perrotin in New York, Kapp Kapp and Vox Populi in [Skip to Main Content](#) I across Europe in Paris, Amsterdam, and Athens. His solo shows have also included “Coral Room” at [Hales Gallery](#), which showed erect figures on balconies, beaches, and in

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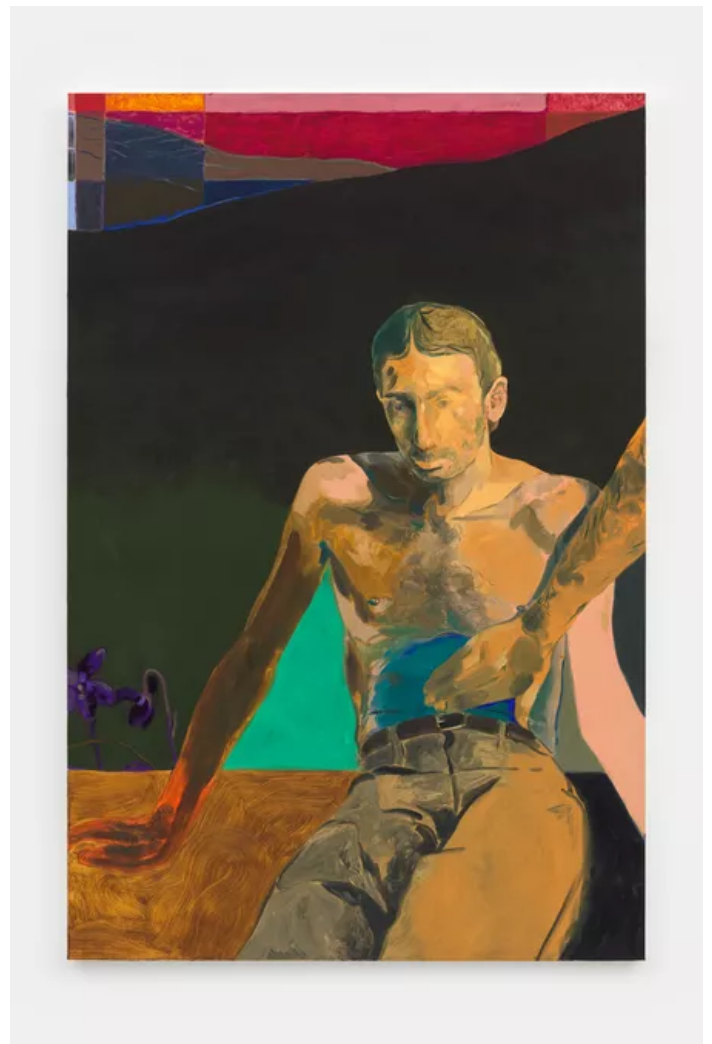
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quickly as they fade away. They emit a force of intimacy which strikes one as particularly painful, acting out atomized scenes inspired from Andrei Tarkovsky's *Stalker* (1979) or Lars von Trier's *Antichrist* (2009), two of Cudahy's favorite flicks.



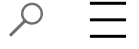
Anthony Cudahy
Lattice (two apart), 2022
GRIMM



Anthony Cudahy, *Hidden Place (violets)*, 2022. Photo by JSP Art Photography. Courtesy of the artist and Hales Gallery, London and New York.

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Both films tell parables about “punishment...for transgressing unknowable rules and borders,” Cudahy explained. In *Stalker*, a

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unknowable forces, he said. The films snare something embedded in Cudahy's work: We may lose touch with the world but we can never really let it go; destiny is dissociation.

Other painted scenes read as if they're sketches from a Joy Williams novel, stylistically minimal with unnerving eco-content, as evinced in *Lattice (two apart)* (2022). The painting details two figures' heads sliced off at the bottom of the frame. The silent heads peer out, on opposite sides of the canvas, against a maroon and bruise-purple latticed wall. Atop the wall sit green stone fruits attached to leafy branches (Yellow plums? Greengage cultivars?). One fruit has been cut open and they balance close to the wall's edge. What could be the fruit's incoming fall is forgotten; neither man gives the wounded fruit much attention. Where there's gravity, though, there's grace: a stranger to pick up the fruit after its fall.

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