

Tracing the Broken Line of the Universe



On Jake Baglin's *Recent Works*

It takes time to position yourself when confronted with a Baglin painting. In the four landscape paintings presented here, the titles seem to indicate a reassuring orientation with their references to familiar landmarks and compass coordinates. Nevertheless, the image itself resists being read as a document of a particular time and a specific place. This is not Google mapping in pigment on canvas and yet we are not cast completely adrift. Like walking into a darkened room, our eyes gradually adjust to the formal arrangement of elements within the frame.

If each work sits outside a particular space, are we likewise outside time? Three of the four landscapes show a darkened sky, and earlier works have referenced specific times of day—early morning—in their titles. The light, then, must come from an artificial source, yet none is visible. It seems to emanate from the forms themselves, suggesting a preternatural illumination which speaks to the non-organic life of things. These unpopulated landscapes feel strangely dense, charged with an atmosphere that may not support life as we know it. Each viewpoint—south or north facing—evokes neither a time before, nor a time after; it doesn't feel like something has *just* happened, nor do we feel the anticipation of something *about* to happen. But neither are we caught suspended in a frozen present, like Brack's harried commuters or Hopper's lost souls. Chronological time, with its linear trajectory and predictable intervals, is altogether abandoned.

Baglin's approach to his subject presents instead a concentration of irreducible times in a patchwork of discontinuous spaces that nevertheless form a new map of the territory: be it streetscape, figure or face. The painting is remade with every sitting. The subject is in a constant state of becoming. The result, then, is not the final version of a sequential series or sequence. There is no "undo" button, no version-history, no process timelapse to suggest an all but inevitable outcome. Between the sketch in situ and mark-making in the studio, the painting is formed, deformed and reformed session by session. This can only occur if the artist is willing to undo and unmake themselves with each return to the easel—disassembling the known world until a new constellation emerges, until each element sings in relation to every other.

Recent Works is an invitation to move beyond familiar tropes and generic conventions. These works are not ideas about art, about landscape, or about tradition; they are vectors tracing a new orientation. Every painter must negotiate the weight of the world as it bears down through art history and its predecessors. In constant communion with their mediators, only the artist knows that what we now see as fixed was once febrile and new. The creative act neither obeys convention nor ignores its masters, living or dead. It breaks things open. From fossilised forms and rigid practices, the artist salvages fragments to forge a new syntax, a new style.

1

**PEDESTRIAN CROSSING, LOOKING SOUTH**

2023 – 24

Oil on linen

Framed

171.5 X 188

2

**PEDESTRIAN CROSSING, LOOKING NORTH**

2023 – 24

Oil on linen

137.5 X 153

3

**PEDESTRIAN CROSSING, LOOKING SOUTH NO. 2**

2023 - 24

Oil on canvas

97 X 107.5

4

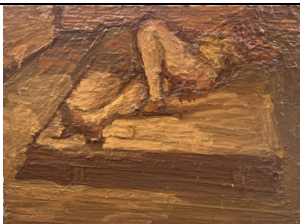
**PEDESTRIAN CROSSING, LOOKING NORTH NO. 2**

2023 – 24

Oil on board

53 X 60

5

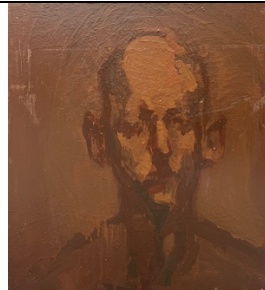
**AAB ON A FUTON**

2024

Oil on canvas

46 X 61.5

6

**LCD**

2023 – 24

Oil on canvas

71.5 X 66.5

7

**OAB**

2024

Charcoal on paper

Unframed

76 X 57

The artist is not an art-making machine, but an inventor, a stylist of new forms. They operate in the pure infinitive of the empty form of time. As spectators, can we adjust our gaze to the singular vision that emerges when familiar oppositions—near and far, light and dark, up and down—are vectorised along the broken line of the universe? Can we sit with the strange science fiction that arises when time, already past and still yet to come, travels unnervingly along a harlequin surface of incongruent spaces and discontinuous times?

Why is it necessary to repaint the world thus? It is only through challenging inherited beliefs and liberating time from its prison of successive presents that something new and unforeseen emerges—like the works in this exhibition.

Mairead Phillips