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Stephen Thorpe:

Who Looks Outside, Dreams;

Who Looks Inside, Awakes

Opening reception: March 22, 2024 6-9 PM

Exhibition continues through May 18, 2024



ATLANTA - Wolfgang Gallery presents Stephen Thorpe's first solo exhibition in Atlanta, 'Who Looks Outside, Dreams; Who Looks Inside, Awakes,' featuring a new body of work that offers a survey-like introduction to the artist's practice. A graduate of the prestigious Royal College of Art in London and a former Professor of Painting at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD), Thorpe paints interiors, informed by an ongoing interest in architecture, psychoanalysis and cultural archetypes.

The paintings in 'Who Looks Outside, Dreams; Who Looks Inside, Awakes' depict threads of themes that regularly appear in Thorpe's work – corners, rugs and birds – but emerging for the first time are waterfalls, reminiscent of the artist's time spent hiking across North Georgia. In a nod to influences of Romanticism, as found in the paintings of German artist Casper David Freidrich, color fields reminiscent of Mark Rothko, and references to the Japanese painter and woodblock printmaker Kawase Hasui, the imagery in Thorpe's paintings – ancient waterfalls, majestic mountains – triggers a primal instinct of awe and awakens the spiritual ancestry that resides in the recesses of one's soul. The works point to the connections between the individual, humanity at large and nature, and reflect on the idea of the world being bigger than oneself. Paintings are intended as moments of solitude to experience elements of nature as ancient cultures might have done, loaded with meaning, and imbued with spirituality. The series is an attempt to apply meaning beyond scientific rationale and recognize the metaphysical nature of existence without over-rationalization, what the artist regards as a ubiquitous flaw of contemporary society.

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Similar to previous series, the works in 'Who Looks Outside, Dreams; Who Looks Inside, Awakes' speak to archetypal symbols and Jungian ideas of the collective unconscious. Native birds of Georgia, revered in indigenous cultures for their closeness to higher powers, are painted in realistic detail in an ode to naturalist John James Audubon and represent a meditation between heaven and earth. Thorpe's signature "corners" also feature prominently throughout the exhibition. Formed by three separate panes, the corners represent psychological space, an interior and exterior, or as Jung states, "a place of sanctuary for self-reflection." Paintings in the show also mark Thorpe's return to wider interior spaces – broader elements of "rooms" – which was the focus of his early career, brought to life through the inclusion of paneling in paintings, Chinoiserie wallpaper, Medieval tapestries and miniature, hand-painted folding screens. Here, where the paintings are sculptures, sculptural screens double as paintings.

Symbols and spaces are rendered in a distinct visual vocabulary. Thorpe's painterly process continues to blur perception, alternating between wet and dry, smooth and rough, controlled and chaotic. Moody and foreboding yet quasi-utopian and idyllic, the landscape elements of the paintings are tight and representative, yet the decorative aspects of the work are looser and more abstract, rendered with a lighter touch, sometimes deliberately scratched back to the surface. An additional dimension of thickly applied paint, impasto in corners, grounds the work, reminding viewers of the artist's hand, the conscious and unconscious choice of mark-making.

About the Artist

Stephen Thorpe (b. 1981, Margate, England) paints interiors, where rooms are likened to the psychological interiors of the mind. Drawing on psychoanalysis, sociology, folklore and the reality of myth, Thorpe's intricately composed paintings are at once representational and abstract, deliberately rendered to represent the dualities, synergies and contradictions of relation between environment and human interiority. Such nuances are present in all aspects of the work – from his painterly process, with visceral and physical applications of paint paired with contemplative, controlled marks; to the chosen subject matter, encompassing busy patterns, half-familiar objects and skewed perspectives juxtaposed with

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quiet, singular planes of color. Thorpe's work offers a rich interplay of fragmented images, half-glimpsed through complex and often entangled emotions, thoughts, dreams and memories, while appropriating various symbols, archetypes, cultural icons, patterns and textures. Through the indexing of graphic and physical modes of painting, his work offers up spaces of connection and disconnection to contemplate how we come to be in relation both to ourselves and others.

Stephen Thorpe is currently based in New York. His work is forthcoming in presentations at Art Basel Hong Kong, Dallas Art Fair and a solo exhibition at Dimin Gallery in New York fall 2024. He received his MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art in London and was previously a Professor of Painting at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). He has been the recipient of numerous prizes, including the Basil H. Alkazzi Foundation Scholarship; Saatchi's Showdown Prize, judged by Kristine Roepstorff and Matthias Weisher; prize winner of the 3rd Ward Open Call; and the Royal Scottish Academy's The Skinny Award. Thorpe's work is held in prominent private and museum collections and has been featured in solo and group exhibitions around the world at venues including Ora-Ora Gallery, Hong Kong; Denny Dimin Gallery, New York and Hong Kong; Saatchi Gallery, London; the National Museum, Gdansk, Poland; Copeland Gallery, London; Summerhall, Edinburgh; the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh; and Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen, amongst others.

About Wolfgang Gallery

Wolfgang Gallery is a contemporary art space located in Atlanta, GA that features emerging and mid-career artists. Our mission is to introduce a foundation for discovering and supporting contemporary art by focusing on inclusivity and diversity within contemporary culture. Our mission is centered on creating a community that connects exceptional artists and collectors that extends beyond the confines of gallery walls.

For inquires, please contact Anna S. K. Masten: anna@wolfganggallery.com. For more information, please visit our [website](#) or follow [@WolfgangGallery](#).