Wallpaper*

Nick Goss brings London's legendary Eel Pie Island Hotel back to life in a series of dreamy paintings

In an exhibition at London gallery Josh Lilley, Nick Goss turns his gaze to the famous former hotel



BY HANNAH SILVER PUBLISHED LAST WEEK IN FEATURES



Nick Goss, *The Waterline*, 2026

(Image credit: Courtesy the artist and Josh Lilley, London. Photo by Ben Westoby / Fine Art Documentation.)

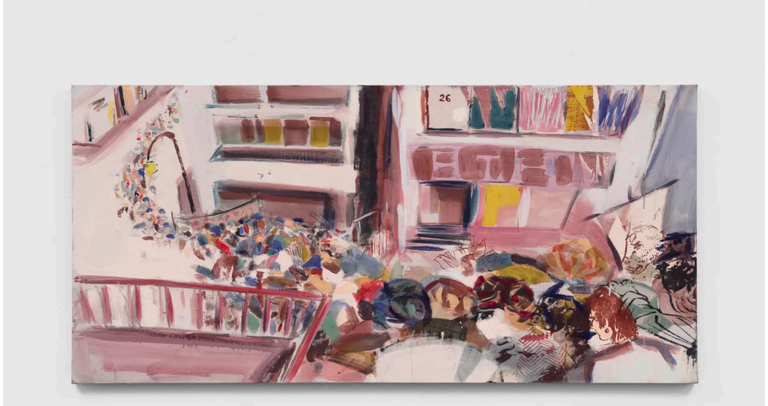
To look at a Nick Goss painting is to step into another world, and it is one in which you can't quite find your place. We may recognise familiar elements, but they are interspersed through a world which could be Venice, or London, set in the present, or perhaps the distant past.

It is an elusive undercurrent which drives the new exhibition at London gallery Josh Lilley. Titled *Eel Pie Hotel*, it encompasses a series of works inspired by the Eel Pie Island Hotel, which was situated in Twickenham, on an island on the Thames, before being destroyed by fire in the Seventies. The hotel was a magnet for musicians, including The Rolling Stones, who held a five-month residency there, David Bowie, Eric Clapton and Pink Floyd.



Nick Goss, *Six Moons*, 2026

(Image credit: Courtesy the artist and Josh Lilley, London. Photo by Ben Westoby / Fine Art Documentation.)

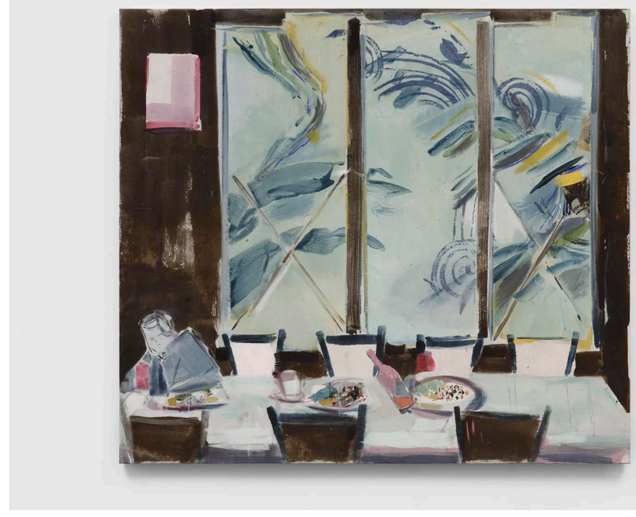


Nick Goss, *Cortége*, 2026.

(Image credit: Courtesy the artist and Josh Lilley, London. Photo by Ben Westoby / Fine Art Documentation.)

This eclectic, glamorous and occasionally lawless history intrigued Goss when he came across it. By its transient nature, both anonymous and intimate, the possibility of capturing fragments of the human life that passed through proved irresistible.

'I think so many great novels and films are set in hotels, or on islands, because it's this open narrative structure that you can start investigating, and make your own in a very fixed practice,' says Goss. Researching the hotel revealed many photos of the exterior, but very few from the inside. 'I've pieced it together from anecdotes of the Chelsea Hotel and I went to the Eel Pie Island Museum, hearing all these stories from the people who used to work there.' Photographs from their archives appear layered onto some of the works, becoming little fragments of the actual people who inhabited the hotel. 'But I've cloned them – they are distorted,' adds Goss.



Nick Goss, *Heavy Shower*, 2026.

(Image credit: Courtesy the artist and Josh Lilley, London. Photo by Ben Westoby / Fine Art Documentation.)

I am reminded of Kazuo Ishiguro's dream-like *The Unconsoled* when looking at the works, as they evoke the same feeling of being trapped in a surrealist labyrinth, in an undefinable, irrelevant place and time. The paintings, which capture scenes - a drink, a walk, a gathering - are richer in feelings than facts.

'I want all of the painting to have an elusive quality. There is just enough information that you can detect a mood. These are all painted through the winter, and I feel like there is a sultry, wintery feel.' Seeing the works in the flesh, you notice they are epic in scale, a conscious choice which speaks to the immersion of the narrative. 'Over the last couple of years, I've scaled the works up, doing some painting on paper to see what works,' says Goss. 'Because I use the same brushes and paints that I would for the big paintings, I think they've got a freedom - the brushes are too big, almost, and it's really effective. You're just really dealing with shape and form.'

Eel Pie Hotel at Josh Lilley until 23 May✱