The Steidz

Nick Goss: “I like the idea of the sound of a painting”

MAXIME GASNIER | 11.09.2024 |
CONTEMPORARY ART / EXHIBITIONS / INTERVIEWS

The British artist (born in 1981, Bristol) presents, at Perrotin, his first exhibition in Paris. From collage to screen printing, to painting, Nick Goss creates his own plastic vocabulary which is based on silent scenes, emptied of any human presence.

In your images, the scenes you represent have a photographic, even cinematic, essence. What is the starting point of your practice?

Nick Goss: My starting point is usually something that catches my eye when I’m walking around town. I try to take a snap on my phone or, if that’s not possible, do a rough sketch when I’m back in the studio. Often it’s just a glance through a shop window or the half-open door of a bar or restaurant. For the project I’m showing at Perrotin, I knew I wanted to paint an island, partly imaginary, partly based on a real place. A fictional world that strangely echoes a place that seems familiar, like something out of our own world. So I went to Margate in Kent and took photographs of the seaside hotels, restaurants and bars that are ubiquitous in that part of the world. I then put these contemporary photographs together with other research about an island that existed off the coast of Britain 600 years ago. I found these archive images at the Warburg Institute in central London. […]

Do you see these scenes as passive backdrops or waiting for some action?

Nick Goss: I think it's a bit of both, the initial intention being to find places that are loaded with potential, places that are open enough to support multiple layers of narrative, places that express a kind of limbo: the ports, the bars and restaurants, the areas between land and water that already contain multiple narratives and stories.

Through a certain fragmentation, you torment the aesthetics of objects and subjects. Technically, how do you use painting to achieve this?

Nick Goss: I think it starts in the preparatory charcoal stage. Even though the images come from observed photographs, sketching has become for me a way of provoking an image, of finding the angles and fragments that indicate a kind of disintegration and entropy. I am increasingly influenced by the drawings of Max Beckmann, their bizarre perspectives, their strange, jagged objects that break up the compositions. At this early stage, I cut out magazines, newspapers and found pieces of textiles and simultaneously add them to the composition to counterbalance or destabilize the image. […]

The figures you show seem erased, reduced to a state of absence, hollowed out. Does your work lean towards an existentialist theory?
Nick Goss: Yeah, I guess that worldview is reflected in a number of my paintings. When I was younger, I read a lot of Camus and Kafka. […] I think my paintings often express being caught in a kind of limbo, spaces that have been recently hollowed out; we are left with traces that need to be recomposed. In the show at Perrotin in Paris, there are also paintings that deal with a broader societal and religious belief, that question our place in a broader, more integral belief system.

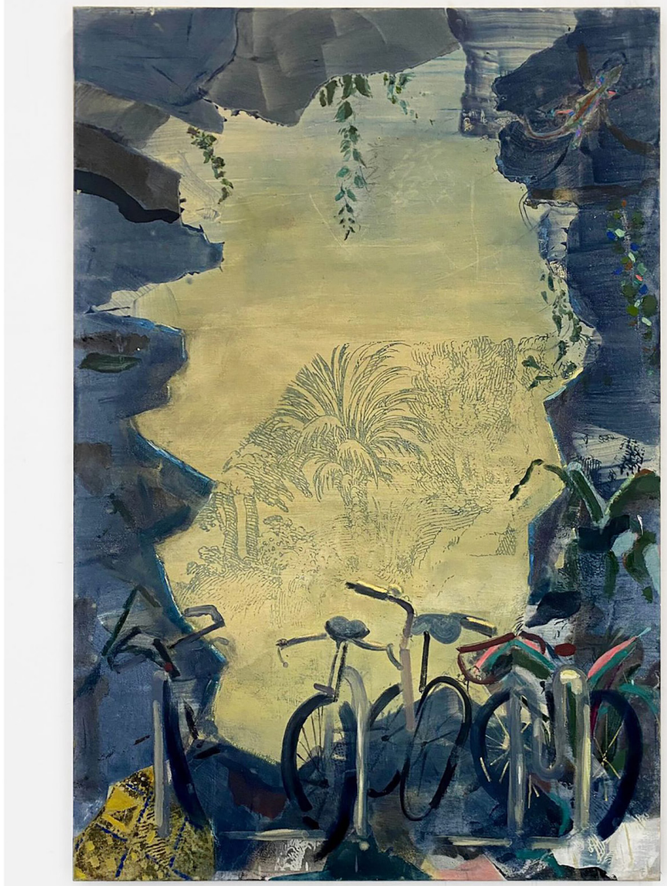
Despite the many details applied in your paintings, it is a question of dehumanized spaces. What does this silence, this emptiness, mean to you?
Nick Goss: I am often drawn to spaces where people gather, meet and play, but which have, for some reason, been recently deserted. […] We can project emotions and character traits onto inanimate objects, so much so that they seem to have a life of their own. I like the idea of the “sound” of a painting. For me, all works have a unique humming quality, a subtle electronic pulse. Often the scenes depicted in my works evoke a type of silence or ambient sound, a drum set recently struck on the waterfront, the sound of a karaoke bar when the microphones are plugged in, the music is playing, but the protagonist has just left the scene. […] •

Find the full interview with Nick Goss in the special edition The Steidz, available on our e-shop.

Exhibition “Isle of Thanet” by Koak
Until September 21, 2024 at Perrotin Paris
76, rue de Turenne – 75003 Paris
perrotin.com



View of Nick Goss's exhibition “Isle of Thanet” at Perrotin, Paris, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin. Photo: Tanguy Beurdeley.



Nick Goss, *Newgate Gap* , 202, tempera, oil and screenprint on linen, 210 × 140 cm. Courtesy of the artist & Perrotin.



View of Nick Goss's exhibition “Isle of Thanet” at Perrotin, Paris, 2024. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin. Photo: Tanguy Beurdeley.



Nick Goss, *Walpole Bay* , 2024, tempera, oil and screenprint on linen, 150 × 200 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin. Photo: Eva Herzog.



Nick Goss, *Old Dixie Down* , 2024, tempera, oil and screenprint on linen, 210 × 140 cm. Courtesy of the artist and Perrotin. Photo: Eva Herzog.