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Financial Times Weekend
Nick Goss: Morley's Mirror
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Visual arts Jackie Wullschläger

Nick Goss: Morley's Mirror
Pallant House Gallery, Chichester

Here is a model of how a museum can engage with emerging contemporary art and simultaneously reinvigorate its permanent display. By giving Nick Goss, a young painter of tremendous flair, his first public exhibition, and also inviting him to curate from its excellent 20th-century British holdings — Edward Burra, Michael Andrews — Pallant thoughtfully explores tradition and influence.

Goss paints urban life near his London studio as a wonderfully laconic series of improvisations. iPhone shots, film stills, silkscreens of fabrics or flyers or takeaway boxes haphazardly picked up, are layered across oil and pigment stick surfaces stained, stencilled, alive with calligraphic marks, watery washes.

Everything swells towards a fragmentary figuration where the city acquires a hallucinatory strangeness yet remains intensely recognisable. "Morley's Mirror" reflects back from a chicken joint's diamond mirror, adorned by plastic tropical plants, interiors, Elephant and Castle street scenes, a jumble of fabrics from Goss's collection. Starting point for "Commute" was Southern Rail's semi-circular floor pattern and moon-shaped door windows; commuters' shoes, legs, bags running up the sides merge with sumptuous textile details; perspectives plunge, zoom, disconcert. "Dolphin Express" splices a still from Theo Angelopoulos' "Trilogy: The Weeping Meadow", about a Greek couple fleeing war, with watercolour passages and cut-out elements from the Evening Standard.

These are new, ambitious compositions that build in pictorial complexity on the stirring "De Ramp" series (2017), some of which are also on show, where Goss, inspired by photographs of a 1953 Dutch flood, imagined a half-submerged metropolis of vanishing figures and crumbling tower blocks, resonant with today's geopolitical realities. Echoing Burra's talent for visionary narrative and Andrews' ability to conjure weightlessness and ambiguity, the works here demonstrate Goss to be one of the most exciting painters of his generation.

pallant.org.uk, to June 9



Nick Goss's 'Morley's Mirror' (2018)