

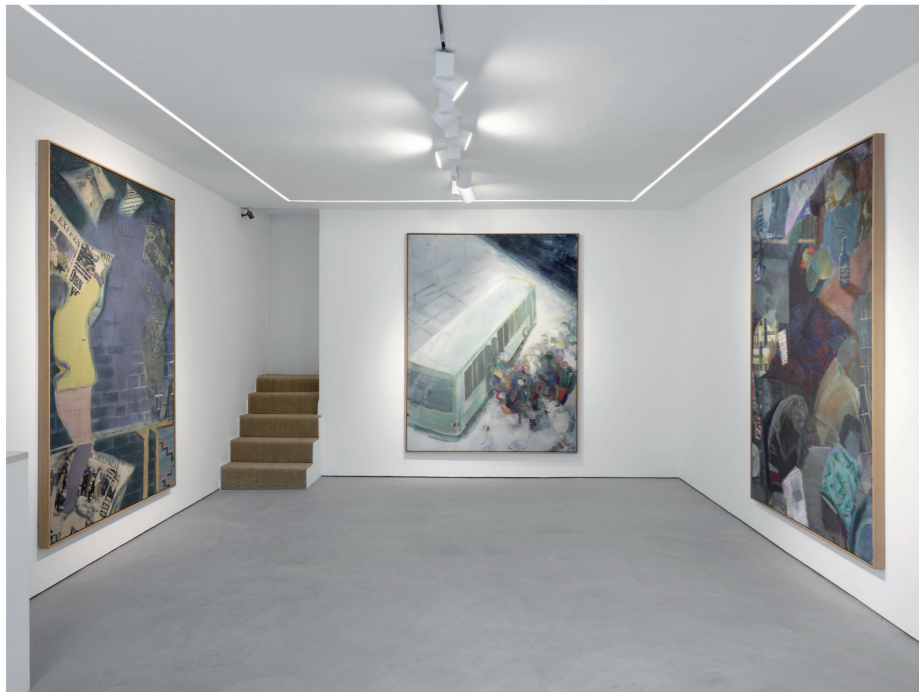
## Nick Goss: Nine Mile Burn at Josh Lilley, London

Posted: 11 December 2020

Friday dispatch

Type: [Read](#)

Read Time: 3 minutes



'Nick Goss: Nine Mile Burn' installation view, 2020. Photographer: George Darrell

A good friend, retired now but formerly a senior executive involved with a variety of areas of industry, tells a great story from his working life. When faced with a particularly knotty problem to solve, or an important document to author, he would take the train from London to Aberdeen and back in a day. The journey offered a space for uninterrupted concentration, all the while giving a constant sense of forward motion and purposeful progress that was particularly conducive to productive thinking. I was reminded of this story when listening to **Nick Goss** talk about the rather extraordinary residency he took this year, which gave birth to the current exhibition.

'The Owner's Cabin' is a residency programme run by the Italian d'Amico Shipping Company. The residencies can last between three weeks and two months, and the artist will only learn what route they are to take a few days before they embark. The point of disembarkation is entirely dictated by the vagaries of international trade. The only company is the ship's crew. The romance of the proposition is more in line with 20th century ideas of travel than our precisely planned 21st century ones.

Only a few short weeks into the residency at the beginning of the year, the captain of the vessel informed Goss that he was becoming aware of worrying reports of a health crisis and that he would be put ashore in Venice. So the paintings in the current show were finished in the artist's studio in the Scottish Borders. Nine Mile Burn is a place. There are paintings here that directly reference things seen while aboard the 183-metre oil tanker, and others that riff on filmic memories such as Federico Fellini's 1983 masterpiece *And the Ship Sails On*.

All the paintings embody the enigma of scenes glimpsed at a distance while passing by. *Departure, 2020* evokes the port bars where travellers while away the hours, each isolated in their thoughts of what they leave behind or what they travel towards. In *Gangway, 2020* it is ambiguous whether the passengers are arriving or leaving, seeming to move in both directions simultaneously. Expressions unreadable, we can't tell if they travel under duress, their hunched shoulders picked out against the rusting hull of the ship. *Bakers Dolphin, 2020* presents a vertiginous perspective, a remembered view down to the quay from an upper deck of the ship. The stolid mass of a bus bisects the canvas in a diagonal from left to right, its solidity in contrast to the teeming crowd trying to board. The crowd is undifferentiated, people experienced as mass or movement, a blur of colour.

The white roof of the bus occupies the middle of the painting and Goss is unafraid to leave plenty of 'fresh air' in the centre of many of his works – such as *Carriage, Express* or *Amanda's*. Incident and protagonists occupy the edges of the works here, their peripheral status lending a certain tension to each composition, like the echo of something said before a pause in a conversation.

This is Goss' fifth exhibition with Josh Lilley and the first in the newly expanded gallery on Riding House Street. The refurbished spaces offer dazzling light even on a grey winter's day. Sight lines across and between two floors perfectly suit Goss' large-scale canvases which have increasingly embraced vibrant colour. Just as the compositions are formally complex, incorporating elements of collaged newspaper and screen printing, so the references alluded to are multifarious and shifting, with narratives agreeably just out of reach.

**Caroline Douglas**  
Director

**Josh Lilley, 40 – 46 Riding House Street, London W1W 7EX. Open Tuesday-Saturday 11.00-18.00. Exhibition continues until 15 January 2021. [www.joshlilleygallery.com](http://www.joshlilleygallery.com)**

