

Nick Goss

The Undercurrents

712 N La Brea Ave

July 8–August 14, 2022

‘The view from my window frame is an extraction, but not exactly a slice through time. Rather it cuts across a different axis, to examine the continuity of place. If I were to flip it from the vertical to a horizontal plane, the rectangular field it pegs out could be an archaeological site of sorts, to dig into with the imagination, and sift its contents for nuggets of the past.’

Kirsty Bell writing in *The Undercurrents*

Submerged landscapes resurface in Nick Goss’ work, offering glimpses into speculative futures. He collapses time and space in his paintings by filtering images of London and personal memories with documentary photographs and found imagery to create places that are simultaneously familiar and intangible. Taking its title from *The Undercurrents*, Kirsty Bell’s 2022 palimpsestic memoir of Berlin, this exhibition centres on the precariousness of images – where linear narrative is disrupted by combining screen-print with painting, the past with the present. This sense of displacement is sharpened by the quiet takeover of the natural world and a heightened colour palette that borders on a dream or apparition.

Deluges are reoccurring themes in Goss’ paintings, a subject that holds rich connections to art history, literature, film and mythology, and is increasingly witnessed in global news coverage. JG Ballard’s 1962 apocalyptic novel *The Drowned World* is a constant anchor in his work in its descriptions of a future London as a tropical lagoon described as “two interlocking worlds apparently suspended at some junction in time.”

Paintings begin with photographs Goss takes in the city traveling between home and the studio, but the framing devices and compression of time in his works come from film, in particular from directors Quentin Tarantino, Rainer Werner Fassbinder and Wim Wenders. Like Wenders, who sets dialogue between characters in peripheral parts of cities, Goss is drawn to in-between places, zones of transit, and spaces that are often given a temporary identity by their current occupants.

Linden Grove (2022), was inspired by a balcony overgrown by plants erupting from an apartment block; a floating Latin American landscape created by Goss’ Columbian neighbour in South London. Like several paintings in the exhibition, it situates the viewer in a small interior, on a threshold that expands onto an unforeseen landscape as a theatrical backdrop. A sulphuric yellow sun blaring over an azure sea is deceptive; the scene expanding beyond the balcony is one of waterlogged fields. The landscapes in *Linden Grove* and another work *Kiosk* (2022) are photo-based screen-prints sampled and enlarged from documentary photographs of historical floods in Tuscany and Holland. Goss’ Dutch relatives were among thousands forced to evacuate from a devastating flood known as De Ramp in 1953; a memory passed on to him by his mother and grandmother that has been surfacing in his paintings from the past decade. The occurrence of screen prints in a number of paintings sets up a fractured narrative across the exhibition.

In *Kiosk*, Goss paints an unexpected still life in the unseen, cramped interior of a London fast-food van where the vendor’s belongings mingle casually with menus, burger baps and bottles of

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sauce. The image accumulates new and seemingly unrelated histories with the addition of a Goss family photograph on the wall which appears in full in another painting, *Ambachstraat* (2022), depicting a group of people relaxing at home, oblivious to a foreboding atmosphere unfolding in the window behind them. It shares a gathering sense of disquiet with other paintings in the exhibition such as the abandoned scene of *A Balcony Man* (2022) which has an explicit sense of the unreal with its swelling high waters and a potted houseplant balancing precariously on the railing. It is in this work that a sense of anxiety edges into the exhibition.

Kipling Street (2022) is an unusually vertiginous canvas of a continuous staircase traversed by spectres of figures, rising but not quite meeting the mountain top in the distance. A yellow atmosphere floods the canvas making the architecture – either an interior or exterior of a brutalist apartment block – barely perceptible.

Shiloh (2022) takes its title from the red Pentecostal Church on Ashwin Street in East London opposite Goss' studio; however, it could be a church in the Caribbean or downtown LA. In the aftermath of a flash flood a solitary cyclist pedals across town through the receding waters with the same tranquillity as the heron wading past *Madame Jojo's* (2022), the now abandoned Soho club Goss's band frequently played. Uncertainty laces both scenes, asking us to question whether the boat in the distance of the club could be a rescue team or a pleasure trip.

Still lifes, interiors and landscapes from different sources and historical contexts rift against one another in Goss's paintings like a jogged memory, alluding to both an unrecognisable present and an imagined future.

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Nick Goss and multi-instrumentalist Jim Wallis were commissioned by Thelma Hulbert Gallery to travel to Canvey Island in the Thames estuary to take field recordings for a soundscape titled *Kesterman's Point*. In 1953 the island was afflicted by the Great Tide when a gale blew the waters of the English Channel up and over the sea defences of the Netherlands and Belgium as well as this part of Essex. Goss has said:

'Canvey Island has a particularly precarious relationship with the tide. It is a region where the sea and land have a mutable association, where the conscious and the unconscious seem to exist together in dreamlike areas on the edges of water.'

We walked through the marshes and alongside a low-lying lagoon making field recordings of slow-moving waters, herons and parakeets amongst the reeds and other ambient sounds where nature and humans closely coexist. In the studio we added to these recordings by layering synth patterns, cello drones and guitar noises. We manipulated the cries of the birds by shifting the pitch and reversing the sounds to reflect the otherworldly qualities of that area. It is unclear where these sounds sit in relation to documentary and the imaginary, a question that also lies in the paintings.'

- Melissa Blanchflower, curator and writer. This text is part of an essay for a forthcoming publication on Nick Goss.

MATTHEW BROWN

Nick Goss (b. 1981, Bristol, UK) Nick Goss lives and works in London. He received his MA in Fine Art from Royal Academy Schools in 2009 and BA in Fine Art from Slade School of Fine Art in 2006.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Mud Angels*, Thelma Hubert, Devon (2022); *Margaritas at The Mall*, Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin (2021); *Nine Mile Burn*, Josh Lilley, London (2020); *Morley's Mirror*, Pallant House Gallery, London (2019); *Dolphin Express*, Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin (2018); *De Ramp*, Josh Lilley, London (2017); *Bluing*, Simon Preston Gallery, New York (2016); *Green Lanes*, Josh Lilley, London (2015).

Recent group exhibitions include *Dear John*, Adams & Ollman, Portland (2021); *Hommage A Rainer Werner Fassbinder*, Contemporary Fine Arts, Berlin (2020); *Rainforest Action Network Exhibition*, Eccleston Project Space, London (2019); *Stains on a Decade*, Josh Lilley, London (2019); *Preparing for What*, Josh Lilley, London (2019); *Botánica*, Berggruen Gallery, San Francisco (2017); *Group Show 2017*, Tannery Arts, London (2017); *Currents*, Lin & Lin Gallery, Taipei (2017); *A New Kitchen Sink*, Josh Lilley, London (2017); *Rhythm & Depiction*, Centre for Recent Drawing, London (2016); *A Place of Our Time*, Palazzo Capris, Turin (2016); *Water Biscuit*, Josh Lilley, London (2016); *What are we gonna paint?*, Annet Gelink Gallery, Amsterdam (2016); *Bread and Jam IV: Modern Mirror*, 52 Whitbread Road, London (2016); *Tutti Frutti*, Turps Gallery, London (2015).