

YOUR FOOT IN MY FACE and other tectonic strategies

14th August – 4th September 2021

closing event Saturday 4th September, 12 – 6pm

YARDPAININGBOOKSALE

plus

LAUNCH of *Jacqui Hallum: Workings & Showings* (published Anomie / KPS)

“Come in, come in,” cried the old man. He was radiant with delight... Porbus and Poussin, burning with eager curiosity, hurried into a vast studio. Everything was in disorder and covered with dust, but they saw a few pictures here and there upon the wall. They stopped first of all in admiration before the life-size figure of a woman partially draped. “Oh! Never mind that,” said Frenhofer; “that is a rough daub that I made, a study, a pose, it is nothing. These are my failures,” he went on, indicating the enchanting compositions upon the walls of the studio [...]

[S]aid Poussin, coming once more toward the supposed picture. “I can see nothing there but confused masses of colour and a multitude of fantastical lines that go to make a dead wall of paint.”

Frenhofer looked for a moment at his picture [...] He sat down and wept.

Honoré de Balzac, *The Unknown Masterpiece*, 1831

Edwin Aitken	<i>Gordon Dalton</i>	Patrick Adam Jones	<i>Katie Pratt</i>
<i>Michael Ajerman</i>	Luke Dowd	<i>Agnieszka Katz Barlow</i>	Clare Rees-Hales
Karolina Albricht	<i>Grant Foster</i>	Simon Keenleyside	<i>Ben Sanderson</i>
<i>Leila Al-Yousuf</i>	Holly Froy	<i>Dominic Kennedy</i>	Ed Saye
Ned Armstrong	<i>Carole Gibbons</i>	Bernadette Kerrigan	<i>Mark Sibley</i>
<i>Phil Ashcroft</i>	Henry Gibbons Guy	<i>Neill Kidgell</i>	Mark Siebert
Suzy Babington	<i>Max Gimson</i>	Phil King	<i>Leah Nyssa Stewart</i>
<i>Anthony Banks</i>	Luke Gottelier	<i>Anna Liber Lewis</i>	Neal Tait
Tristan Barlow	<i>Rebecca Gould</i>	Iwan Lewis	<i>Ross Taylor</i>
<i>Fungai Benhura</i>	Thomas Greig	<i>Xiao-yang Li</i>	Susan Taylor
Kiera Bennett	<i>Rebecca Guez</i>	David Lock	<i>Hannah Turner-Duffin</i>
<i>Karl Bielik</i>	Rob Hall	<i>Scott McCracken</i>	Henry Ward
Kofi Boamah	<i>Jacqui Hallum</i>	Kirsty McEwan	<i>Paul Wardski</i>
<i>Miranda Boulton</i>	Andy Harper	<i>Vanessa Mitter</i>	Joe Warrior Walker
Matthew Burrows	<i>Alice Hartley</i>	Francesca Mollett	<i>Casper White</i>
<i>Simon Burton</i>	Marcus Harvey	<i>Rosie Mullan</i>	Isabel Wilkinson
Ilker Cinarel	<i>Helen Hayward</i>	Hannah Murgatroyd	<i>Nicola Williams</i>
<i>Jake Clark</i>	Adam Hedley	<i>Tahmina Negmat</i>	Rose Williams
Sarah Cooney	<i>Adam Holmes Davies</i>	Mahali O'Hare	<i>Sam Windett</i>
<i>Billy Crosby</i>	Diane Howse	<i>Joe Packer</i>	Laura Wormell
Martyn Cross	<i>Mark Jessett</i>	Daniel Pettitt	
<i>Leigh Curtis</i>	Liam Jolly	<i>Alexander James Pollard</i>	

YARDPAININGBOOKSALE

This recent period of restricted access and confined movement has led to the publication of many excellent books of paintings. Come browse and buy these titles from Kingsgate's new yard space on **Saturday 4th September**.

We will also be (belatedly) launching *Jacqui Hallum: Workings & Showings* including essays by Hettie Judah, Andy Hunt and Dan Howard-Birt published by Anomie & Kingsgate Project Space.

Plus... the launch of the publication **YOUR FOOT IN MY FACE and other tectonic strategies** with notes on paint matter, painting process and how paintings relate to other painting by the exhibiting painters.

A painter picks up a brush, pulls it through one of the increasingly disordered deposits of wet colour arrayed across an impromptu palette. Stops. Looks back at the small canvas hastily nailed to the studio wall and steadily coalescing into a thing that works. In the few seconds it has taken to switch brushes, to find the next colour, the painting has changed. The glaring omission in the mesh of marks so urgently in need of mending (or tending) isn't there anymore. Or at least it isn't as pronounced as it was. The certainty, the inevitability of the next mark has dissolved. The painter looks harder. Eyes scanning the tacky surface. Doubt crystallises. Fingers gripping the paint-tipped brush begin to twitch, imploring the brain to snap out of this impasse. The painter puts the brush back onto the palette and looks even more intently. Coloured area to coloured area, line to line. And then generally. The whole object. Eyes focussing and de-focussing. And then it appears... the problem. The gap in the play of shapes, the rupture in the rhythm of touches. The painter is certain that this isn't quite the same awkwardness that just minutes ago was so unavoidable. But this new problem... well, dealing with this matter might still bring the whole thing together, but in a slightly different way? Anyhow, this new problem is swelling in its irritability. Quickly, the previously loaded brush is snatched-up and the colour is stroked onto the surface as if to salve a wound. *Yes!* Then. Another look. Eyes roaming. But drawn back and back again to this newest deposit. *No!* Another touch with the brush, softer, slower this time, just to articulate and complicate the immediacy of the previous hasty smear. *Is it right?* All the painter can see is the clanging newness, the vulgarity of these twin touches. The painter turns, grabs the rag from the table and in one movement these vain attempts at resolution are gone. The painting seems better now. Or. Were those last marks actually pretty good? The painter thinks: *Was I too hasty? What have I done?...* It's okay. I can make those marks again. *But will a new attempt be able to capture what those wiped marks achieved? ... Maybe it's better without those marks... That fault in the tension of the net of smudges and stripes and dots is good.* The hole. The gap. That's what the painting needs. *Maybe that's what the painting is about?* More looking. More problems. More colours. More touches with the brush and wipes with the rag. More holes. Holes and gaps and weaknesses in the tension seem to bloom fresh in between each look. *Are all these problems new? Were these failings here before? How did I not see these before?* How many good holes can this painting use anyway? *Fuck!* These are another day's problems...

In the studio next door. A painter picks up a brush, pulls it through one of the increasingly disordered deposits of wet colour arrayed across an impromptu palette. Stops. Looks back at the small canvas.

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During the past 18 months seeing paintings for all their material complexity has been almost impossible. Yet it would be too easy to say that the smart phone screen took the place of the gallery wall in 2020/21, suggesting that it foreclosed on the qualities and possibilities of scale, colour, speed and the rugged knot of sequential painting actions and changes-of-mind inscribed onto the surface of paintings. This temporary substitution of architectural space for digital space wasn't absolute because we are complex 'lookers'. We don't see a thing at 2"x 2" and think that that is its actual size. We can look at paintings on a phone and know them for what they are: paint on a substrate, nailed to a studio wall somewhere. But unquestionably something *is* missing from paintings when seen backlit on phone screens. Meanwhile, the speed of looking at paintings further accelerated and superficial value judgements became okay.

As well as indulging the return of exhibitions of material rich paintings after an extended period of home-bound incarceration, **YOUR FOOT IN MY FACE ...** attempts to think about complicated and contested ways of looking.

The **FOOT** in the **FACE** of the title acknowledges the pleasure and almost masochistic challenge of looking at painting *as* material. When a painting refuses to give itself up as merely a sequence of signifiers; where *a priori* 'meaning' isn't manifest by the painter sufficiently clearly so that a casual glance is enough to 'get it'; when the 'looker' must get their face up *into* the painting to deal with it, and even then, only questioningly and never comprehensively.

All looking at painting is difficult. Nearly a century of elegantly spaced white-wall exhibitions has lately bred a kind of zombie-looking. Instagram doesn't help, with its round-the-clock scroll of deoxygenated painting surrogates. Busy salon-hangs seem to carry an implicit criticism of a time before modernism's insistence on clarity and specialness, but in the light of Instagram might busy painting displays also propose a possibility for meaning and complex value judgements *because* of the challenge of their polyglot chorus?

Could it be that spacious exhibitions actually give paintings too easy a ride? What are painters and curators afraid of anyway? That paintings can't cope with complicated environments? Or that 'lookers' no longer have the patience or the skills to see and read painting? In reality, most paintings which are not slowly rotting on storage racks in studios and museums spend long and generous lives on the complicated and idiosyncratic walls of our homes.

This exhibition believes in the robustness and resilience of painting. It has faith too in those looking at paintings, but it understands that looking at paintings is as complicated as making paintings. **YOUR FOOT IN MY FACE ...** doesn't make it easy for paintings or for 'lookers' but it is a fertile environment for good painting and good 'looking' to thrive.