

ARTIST

Brian Harte



Installation view: Brian Harte, *Everything you touch* solo exhibition at GNYP Gallery in 2020

Brian Harte

Eist

2020

oil on linen

71 x 61 cm

28 x 24 in



Brian Harte
Body (erased)
2019

oil and crayon on canvas

190 x 150 cm
75 x 59 in



Brian Harte

Family

2017

oil on linen

165 x 210 cm

65 x 83 in





Brian Harte

One of the main characteristics of **Brian Harte's** paintings is his bold use of color and the indeterminate condition of the canvases' figures, which remain in a state between the sketch-like and the finished. The observer's eye travels through the richly detailed and chaotic spaces depicted in the artist's big canvases and slowly finds familiar elements, unnoticeable at first glance. A tile pattern in the background might recall a kitchen backsplash, for instance, whilst elsewhere you might detect the outline of something like a teacup or a knife. Therefore, Harte pursues an investigation on the relationship between abstractionism and figuration, between the sketch-like and the finished, a process that relates to the tradition of British painting.

He graduated with first class honors at the Crawford College of Art and Design in Cork, and has been awarded the Arts Council of Ireland's Project Award on two occasions. Brian Harte was born in 1978 and lives and works in County Tipperary, Ireland.





Brian Harte

Night

2017

oil on canvas

32 x 42 cm

12.5 x 16.5 in

Since 2019 part of the museum's collection at the
Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, in Germany

Brian Harte

Everything you touch

NOVEMBER 14, 2020 - JANUARY 9, 2021

“Landscape is the work of the mind,” claimed the great historian Simon Schama. “Its scenery is built up as much from strata of memory as from layers of rock.” Be it an idyllic plain field or an obscure wasteland, landscapes are also reservoirs of references; our references, indistinguishable from our biographies. Landscapes may look beautiful and bright from a distance, like the very narrative we tell ourselves of who we are. But come closer and you’ll notice how injured and scarred its surface is, full of mysterious traces and unjustifiable marks. There’s more to a landscape than meets the eye.

It may sound a bit peculiar to classify Brian Harte’s works as landscapes. In his third exhibition with GNYP Gallery, however, Harte is clearly showing a new departure from his previous oeuvre, expanding his occupation area from the unmistakable inside to a yet ambiguous outside. According to the artist, these spaces, “act for me as metaphysical spaces, sometimes landscapes, or theatre sets to hang my thoughts or my mood in paint.” Besides, these topological characteristics — are they interiors or exteriors? — corroborates with the idea of a different kind of panorama, always seen from a medium distance.

Therefore, if we are willing to accept that landscapes can provide us with new meanings that extrapolates the definitions that were used for so long, then, perhaps, we may have found a new configuration for what the genre can imply: an opening into our minds and into the world outside, where our actions — private, political, familiar, dreamlike — unfold. But what is exactly unfolding in these canvases?

Harte’s family is somehow there, making their appearance in stealth mode, discretely. There is someone there, no doubt about it, although you never know exactly who, or what they are actually doing. There may be also a specter of a bottle. The sketch of a chair. The suggestion of some activities. However, that’s about all we are granted to absorb. When you look again, the setting may have changed. The objects, displaced. The emotional climate, shifted. Can there be a more accurate approximation to the world of the mind? Of the family bubble we all experience, in a way or another? Nothing is stable. It never was.

The beautiful colors employed in these canvases, the warm radiance of tones, essays a familial environment, even if an unclear one. Yet, the proximity between persons and objects, their fluid presence, is granted unrestraint freedom, for the spaces are always full of breath. Even if sometimes, as in *Son* and *Kilter*, a closeup follows.

Brian Harte’s paintings are loaded with references, tiny openings that show as much of his inner world as of things outside of it: the dynamic and dreams and mysteries of everyday life. The starting point for these works may be controlled; the results, endless. The core is the infinite variety contained in the spaces where the theater of our lives blossom.

The landscapes of our souls.

by João G. Rizek



Installation view: Brian Harte, *Everything you touch* solo exhibition at GNYP Gallery in 2020

I try to create a network of things to engage in. It draws people into the picture plane and then it can go anywhere, which is what I enjoy most about looking at paintings.

Brian Harte





I conveniently forget how any painting starts. If I start a white canvas with a strong concept or idea, it inevitably fails. Painting for me isn't illustration.

Heavily conceptual beginnings usually don't stand up to the pressures of actually making something with a substance that is messy at heart.

Brian Harte



Brian Harte

X will mark the place

APRIL 25 - MAY 25, 2019

The richly detailed and chaotic spaces depicted in Brian Harte's paintings invariably draw the viewer's attention, as the eye repeatedly comes across familiar elements and symbols that are then lost again amidst the judicious chaos of the dense colours and composition as quickly as they appeared. A tile pattern in the background might recall a kitchen backsplash, for instance, whilst elsewhere you might detect the outline of something like a teacup or a knife. Shapes resembling the markings on a football pitch, on the other hand, open up room to play with motifs and pictures within the picture. One thing you won't find, however, is anything solid to hold onto. The rooms and objects suggested appear to float on the surface of the painting, while hints of perspective, three-dimensionality and spaciousness further emphasise the flatness of the canvas. This flatness counteracts the perception of depth in the image at critical moments, so that ultimately, the distance between viewer and image cannot be overcome. In the world of Harte's imagery, we are outsiders, left behind even when we appear to be close to grasping their complexity. This creates a sense of tension on the canvas that seeks to engage the gaze. Harte's paintings have something deeply psycho-logical about them, something that remains unfathomable. Their small, identifiable components in the midst of impenetrable swathes of colour locate them at the intersection of the conscious and the unconscious, playing with the relationships between the inner self and its immediate, concrete surroundings.

This peculiar degree of uncertainty is not only integral to the experience of viewing Harte's paintings, it's also a constitutive aspect of the creation of the images themselves. Harte's continuous process as he paints each day in the little studio behind his house is primarily intuitive, allowing fresh impressions from his home and family to find their way into his paintings; though it remains difficult to order them into any sort of personal narrative. In this way, his work as a whole takes on the form of an unstructured archive of everyday experiences, sensations and objects, compiled by Harte and presented to the viewer in an all but unfiltered form. Thus documentary like, he leaves traces of himself in the world – lasting proof of his existence. He also incorporates other material, such as old photographs, especially in his most recent paintings. These evoke a mix of memories, both painful and pleasurable, and demonstrate that for Harte, the past is a component in our experience of the present. His recent works above all interrogate the normalcy of the tangible features of our existence. In other words, he questions everything from the structure of life with his wife and children to the nature of simple household items to the colour of the walls in his kitchen. As such, the uncertainty when one looks at Harte's paintings becomes even more pronounced. Nothing in the worlds he depicts is self-evident; on the contrary, most of their elements raise questions or create confusion. As viewers, we set ourselves the same task as Harte faces in his work: to investigate impressions of everyday life and ask ourselves what they provoke in us.

by Klara Niemann



Installation view: Brian Harte, *X will mark the place* solo exhibition at GNYP Gallery in 2019



Installation view: Brian Harte, *X will mark the place* solo exhibition at GNYP Gallery in 2019



Installation view: Brian Harte, *X will mark the place* solo exhibition at GNYP Gallery in 2019

Brian Harte

Family

NOVEMBER 16, 2017 - JANUARY 14, 2018

There is always a certain narrative in Brian Harte's paintings, although he does not plan his images. Instead he rather attacks them. His paintings emerge out of an evolving set of impulses. But he does not transform his impressions in an act that can be compared to traditional action painting. His compositions and colors are carefully chosen and applied to the canvas.

While taking a closer look at Harte's painting night, one can observe a highly constructed surface. On a nondescript red background blurring thin lines imply a room. There is a sink, a shelf and a window allowing us to gain a glimpse of the night. A nude appears in the window. Above the shelf we can see a yellow object that is literally labeled with the word "lemon". This typical symbol of vanitas imagery is quoted by the artist as a lost symbol. Also, the nude in the window looks more like a painting attached to the wall, rather than an actual nude seen through a window. The pictorial subject allows us to reflect on the traditional conditions of painting. By depicting a well-known vanitas symbol on the one hand and recalling the significant window topic within the history of painting on the other hand, the artist is obviously dealing with his art historical heritage.

Harte is particularly interested in his relationship with the old and new masters. While the lemon reminds us of Manet's enigmatic portrait of the selfsame fruit, the isolated and distorted character portraits let us think of Francis Bacon's compositions.

Reflecting on his education is one of two central motifs in Harte's artistic practice. The other central motif is his social environment, involving intimate scenes with his wife and his little daughter. The abstracted figures typically appear isolated, set against flat nondescript backgrounds. In many cases we can see clearly how the background happens to get a special treatment. The gestural texture of the surface implies the impulsive approach of Brian Harte's painting practice. Thin lines of pencils indicate shapes and contours. Color drops appear sporadically.

Looking at his work auto portrait we can observe how an almost brutal arrangement of distinct colors and shapes being expressively combined with each other. The composition represents the artist's psychological and at the same time ambiguous reflection. The intertwining forms twist the mind of the viewer. By letting the paint dissolve at the bottom of the abstract portrait, the canvas is revealed as a two-dimensional field, leaving us with the question: where does the illusion drop?



Installation view: Brian Hart, *Family* solo exhibition at GNYP Gallery in 2017



Installation view: Brian Harte, *Family* solo exhibition at GNYP Gallery in 2017

My family and the structure of our home has always been a source for my work. They are a vehicle I use to save me from floating off into space. Themes and concepts arise to me in the act of painting, not before it.

Brian Harte



Brian Harte

Selected Solo Exhibitions

2021

Endless worlds

Annarumma Gallery, Napoli (Italy)

2020

Everything you touch

GNYP Gallery, Berlin (Germany)

Tables Manners

Jac Forbes Gallery, Malibu (USA)

Subbuteo I Brian Harte

These Days, Los Angeles (USA)

2019

X will mark the place

GNYP Gallery, Berlin (Germany)

2018

This life domestic

Ever Gold [Projects], San Francisco (USA)

2017

Family

GNYP Gallery, Berlin (Germany)

2010

No Romance

The Origin Gallery, Dublin (Ireland)

Selected Group Exhibitions

2021

Maki Gallery, Tokyo (*upcoming*)

2020

VISION X

Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin (Ireland)

2019

Gold Standard

Evergold Projects, San Francisco (USA)

25th Anniversary Show

Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg (Germany)

2016

Human Condition

Former Los Angeles Metropolitan Medical Center, Los Angeles (USA)

ICM

Constellation Blvd., Los Angeles (USA)

2015

Royal Hibernian Academy, 185 Annual Summer Exhibition (Ireland)

2013

Wool House

Somerset House, London (UK)

2011

Everything Soon

The Joinery, Dublin (Ireland)

Collections

Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg (Germany)

Crawford Municipal Gallery (Ireland)

Office of Public Works (Ireland)

Contemporary Irish Art Society (Ireland)

University College Cork (Ireland)

I.N.T.O. (Ireland)

Bank of Ireland (Ireland)

Allied Irish Bank (Ireland)

Private collections

CONTACT & INQUIRIES

GNYP Gallery

Knesebeckstraße 96
10623 Berlin

+49 (0) 30 31 01 40 10

office@gnypgallery.com
www.gnypgallery.com