



Justin Williams

Drowning Men Are Supposed To

26 November, 2021 – 13 January, 2022

COMA

COMA is pleased to present *Drowning Men Are Supposed To*, a solo presentation of new work by Justin Williams, on view 26 November, 2021 – 13 January, 2022 in the gallery. This is the artist's second solo show with COMA.

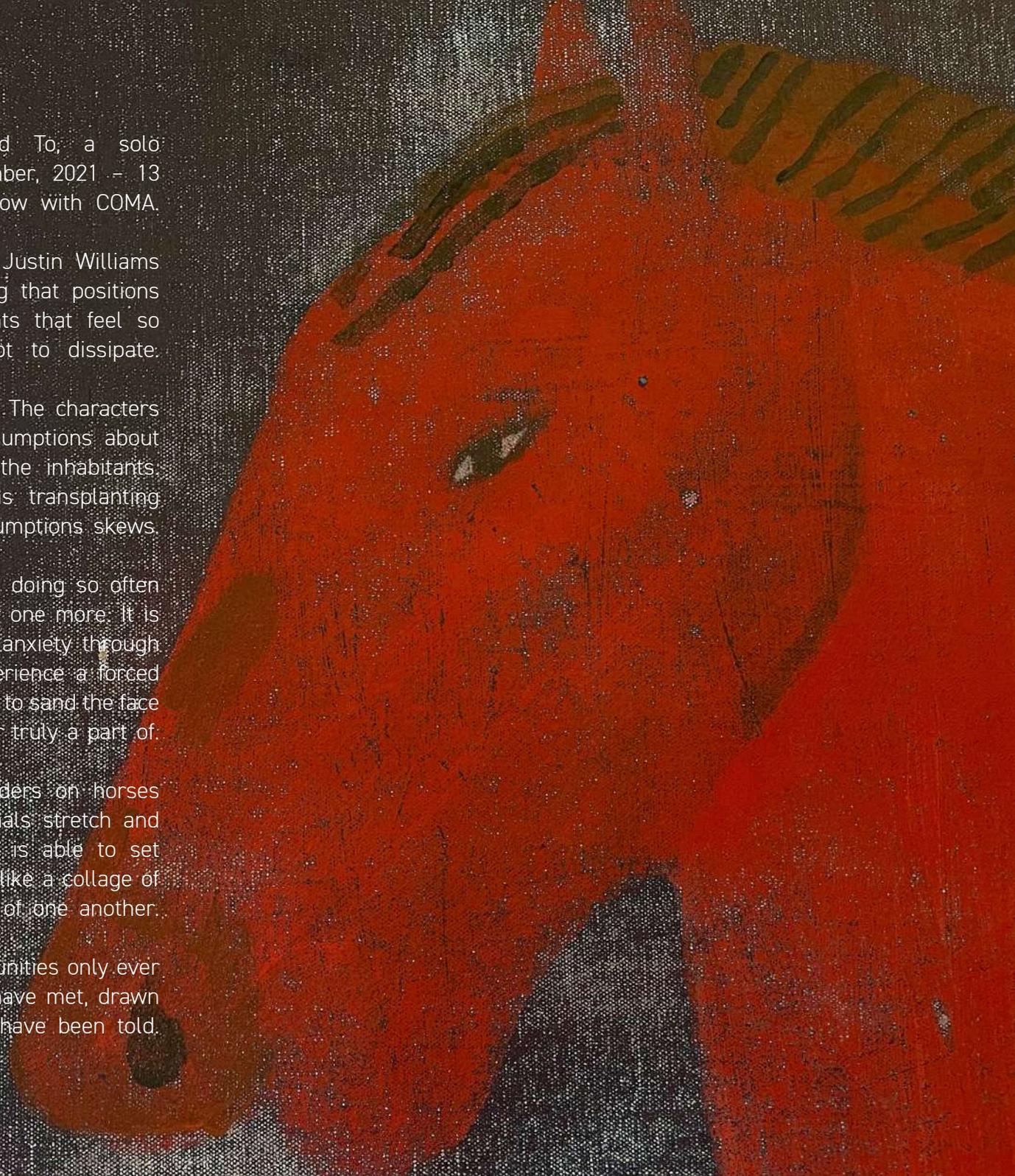
Using an amalgam of people, of cultures and of points in time, Justin Williams has developed a language embedded in acts of figurative painting that positions figures, both real and imagined, in historical or cultural moments that feel so akin to one another the differences and abnormalities attempt to dissipate.

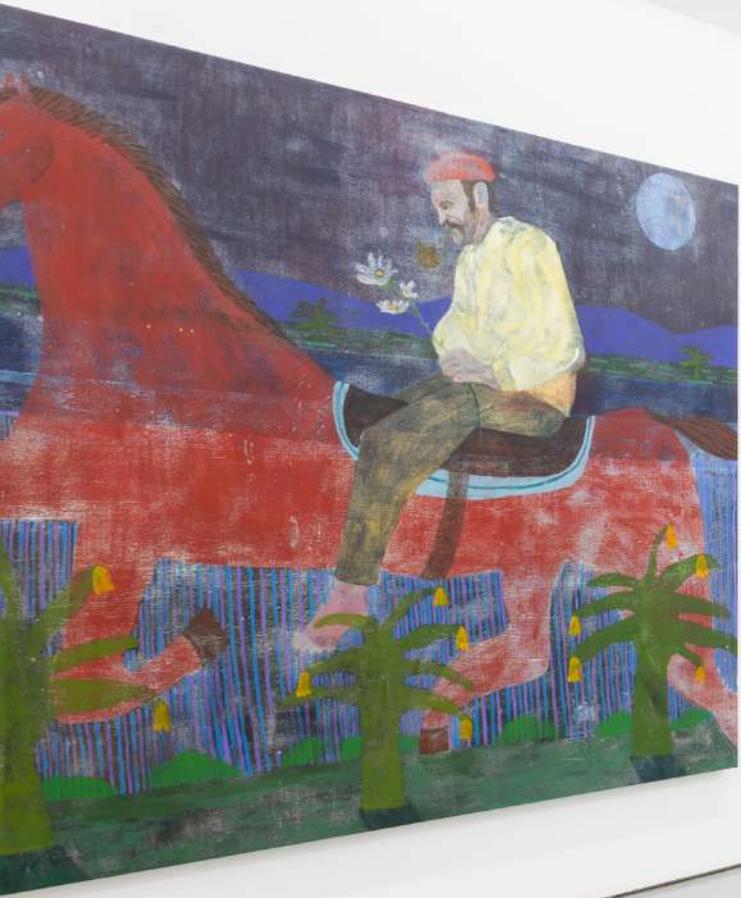
This is storytelling at its finest, at its loosest and most malleable. The characters that populate the canvas cause the viewer to naturally make assumptions about the time-period, the location, the occupations, and the lives of the inhabitants. By inserting nods to familial and personal histories as well as transplanting figures from a range of source material the accuracy of these assumptions skews.

These intimate vignettes create an initial sense of welcome but in doing so often identify that either a key figure is missing or that there is room for one more. It is at this point that Williams asks the viewer to share in a sense of anxiety through connection. The synthesis of cultural identifiers allows one to experience a forced nostalgia - something Williams has been working with since beginning to sand the face of his canvases - a role to play in a personal history one was never truly a part of.

Physically the paintings work to make this atmosphere clear. Riders on horses seem immobile and completely still whilst the bodies of the animals stretch and elongate as if aching to move. Like a merry-go-round the artist is able to set opposing figures or painted components in a state of stasis, almost like a collage of sorts, gradually moving together as if dependant on the existence of one another.

Looking at these artworks one can feel that they are privy to communities only ever meant to be passed through, groupings of people that may never have met, drawn from recent histories we have lived, we have read about, or we have been told.

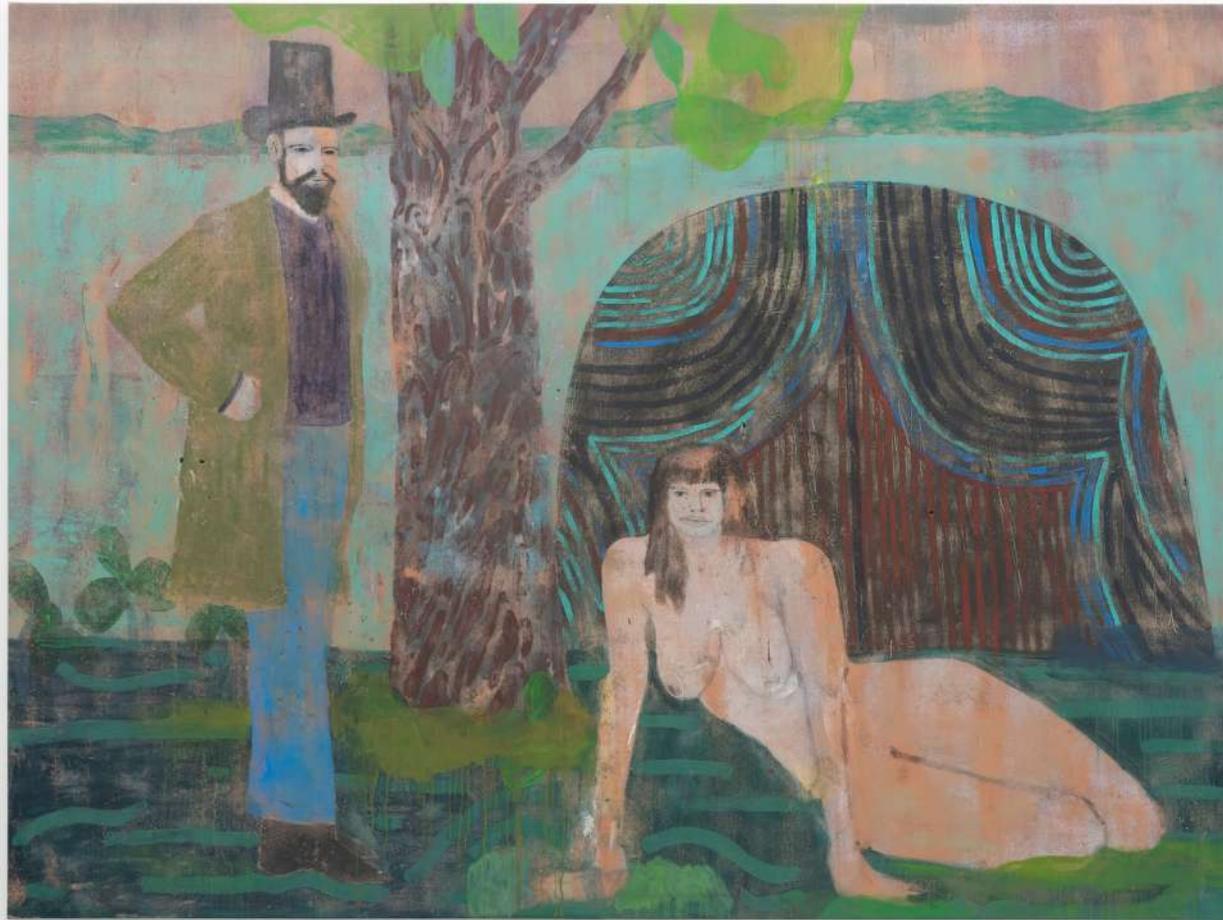






Justin Williams (b. 1984, based in Sydney, Australia) produces contemporary figurative and representative artworks that focus on community, migration and modes of living. Rendered in murky oil paints and thin washes of colour, Williams's figures and landscapes appear to hover above the canvas as they glow from within. In these artworks, the artist attempts to depict both the transitions of his grandparents' migration from Egypt to Australia, and also his own outsider perspective towards both notions of place and time as well as hidden normalities within a group or individual. Williams views his own bloodline as something he is inherently close to but conversely was not directly exposed to and thus a distant or even historical viewpoint is enlisted.

Williams's recent solo exhibitions includes Village, Vigo Gallery, London, UK, 2021; An Invitation, Sade Gallery, Los Angeles, 2019; Before '84, COMA, Sydney, Australia, 2019; Arcana part II, Galerie l'Inlassable, Paris, 2018; Arcana, Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne, 2017; Figures & Vessels, Silas von Morisse Gallery, Brooklyn, NY, 2016; Viridian, 2014, Anna Pappas Gallery, Melbourne; Mountain I Miss You, 2013, Mild Manner, Brisbane; A Touch of Norway, 2012, Lapis Lazuli Pop Up Factory Gallery, Melbourne, and numerous group exhibition in Australia, the US and Europe. He has been featured in Artist Profile, Australian Creative and New York Arts Magazine.



Justin Williams

A visit to the enclave, 2021

oil on canvas

197 x 261 cm

77 9/16 x 102 3/4 inches

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Justin Williams

Fast workers die young, 2021

oil on canvas

122 x 91.5 cm

48 x 36 inches

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Justin Williams

It takes a steady hand to navigate open waters, 2021

oil on canvas

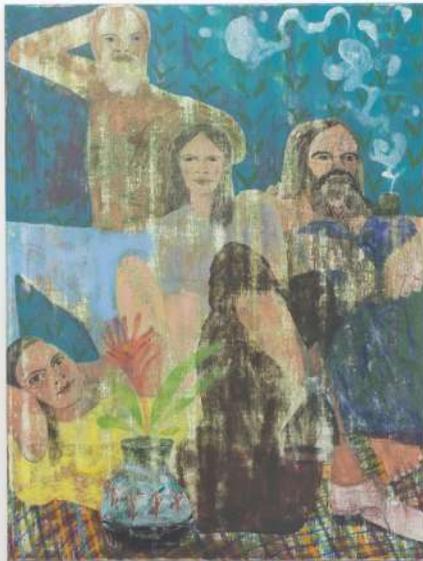
197.5 x 255 cm

77 3/4 x 100 3/8 inches

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Justin Williams

Hello, hello (afternoon), 2021

oil on canvas

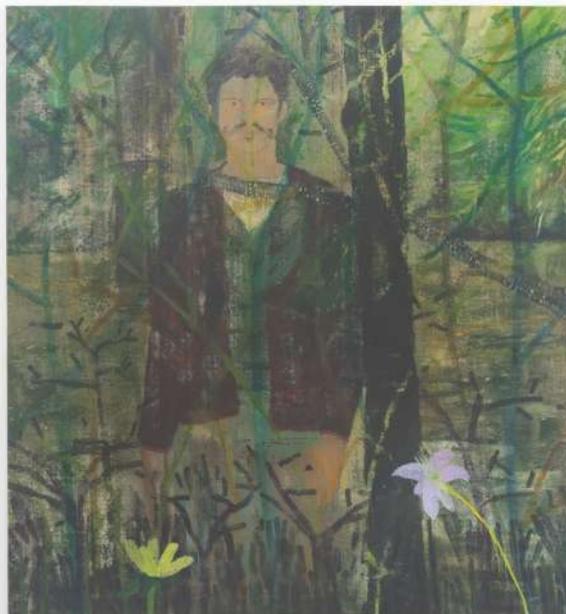
122 x 91.5 cm

48 x 36 inches

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Justin Williams

*If the water was a shell and the land was the back of my hand,
then we can all move forward, 2021*

oil on canvas

132 x 122 cm

51 15/16 x 48 inches

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Justin Williams

Scorpion bites and shoes from cuba, 2021

oil on canvas

195.5 x 204 cm

76 15/16 x 80 5/16 inches

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