

COMA

Press Release

Justin Williams
Drowning Men Are Supposed To

Dates:
26 November, 2021 - 13 January, 2022

Opening Reception:
Friday 26 November, 6-8 pm

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.

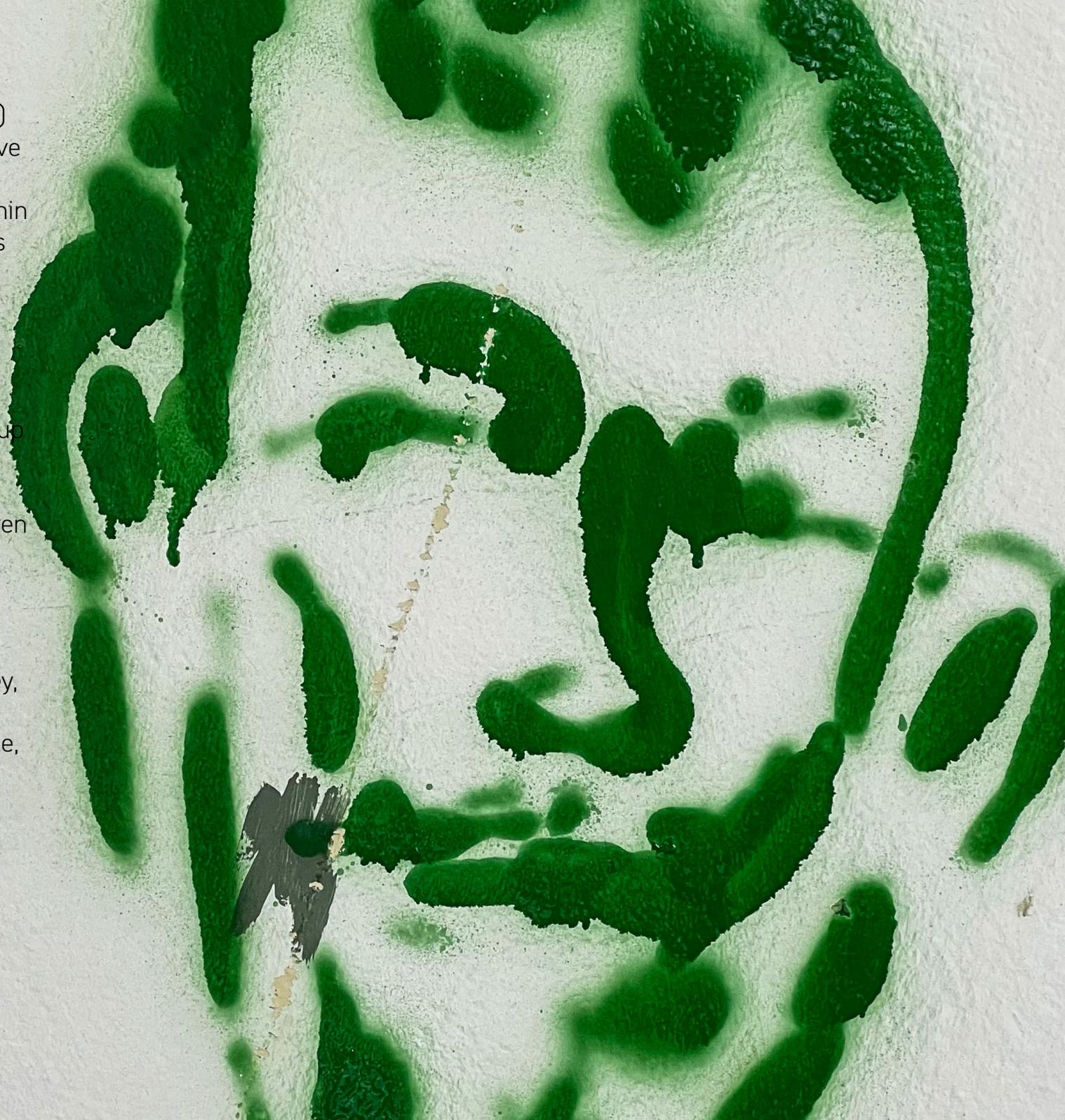




Justin Williams in his studio, Marrickville, Sydney, 2021.
Photo by Irving Zhang

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 William, *Before '84*, 2019, Installation View, COMA, Sydney.



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