



Fergus Hare, Snow Scene #8, 2021



Fergus Hare, Crowd Scene #1, 2020

An Imagined History – SPRING/BREAK Art Show 2022

Fergus Hare & Jonny Green

Sept 7th – 12th 2022
625 Madison Avenue, New York City

SPRING/BREAK is the curator-driven art fair which takes place in both NYC and Los Angeles. SPRING/BREAK returns for its 11th exhibition in New York City in September 2022.

New Art Projects are delighted to present *An Imagined History*, a two-person painting show that directly confronts the history of two distinct genres of painting, landscape and portraiture, while critiquing it from a contemporary perspective.

For the last two or so years Fergus Hare has been working almost exclusively in acrylic paint and in that time he has also been working on a few particular themes, 'Crowd' paintings, 'Beach Scene' paintings and 'Snow Scene' paintings. These works reference historical paintings from the late 19th Century to the 1920s, however they also function as memory triggers, as they evoke a time past or a place and time remembered.

For the 'Crowd' series, Hare begins with photographic source material. Either taken by himself or from photos that I have 'found' or bought. These images represent a group of people brought together for one common reason. Their movement and positioning is random. The colours are mostly by chance, and yet out of these chance occurrences sometimes a perfect 'painterly' composition is possible.



Fergus Hare, Beach Scene #1, 2021



Jonny Green, Coventry Patmore, 2021



Jonny Green, Ernie Mills, 2021

There is a lack of facial detail, and character is determined by posture and the clothes that they wear, until they become almost abstract. The time, place, the reason for a crowd to be assembled and the identity of the people in these paintings are irrelevant. He aims to keep them as ambiguous as possible so that the viewer can assign a meaning or place and time to the work.

With the beach and snow scene works this process is repeated, and we are given only slight clues to the historicity of each image, the style or cut of a swim suit, the date of construction of a building. This opened ended approach to his subjects allows Hares work to float through time and through art history more freely, and also the viewer to put themselves directly into the pictures.

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Jonny Green has taken society portraits by John Singer Sargent (1856-1925) of women depicted resplendent in their finery and painted them as men. The life of John Singer Sargent's and his paintings in particular, with their implicit assumptions of the sitters' privilege and wealth, have fascinated Green. The trappings of wealth, and the ephemera displayed around Sargent's sitters speak clearly and broadly about the values of his time, and about the high society he wished to portray.

Jonny Green was especially drawn to a portrait of Vernon Lee, a pseudonym for Violet Paget (1856-1935) in the Tate Gallery London. A lifelong friend of Sargent, a 'lesbian writer of supernatural fiction' who during her life refused to be labelled as a lesbian, despite always dressing 'à la garçon'. The sexual ambiguity of this picture and its sitter is extraordinary for its time. Sargent, a lifelong bachelor was involved in a moneyed group of central European intellectuals and free-thinkers, who were more accepting and indeed more radical than the society of the time.

"Many gay men, flamboyant performers, intellectuals, he was very comfortable with all of them."

Green has chosen to look again now at the world and milieu inhabited by Sargent and his circle, at a time when gender pronouns and identity is being questioned again. In our current climate gender fluidity is more open, and more recognised, with many public figures declaring themselves to be somewhere on a spectrum that defies categorisation and where a new generation believe in acceptance and

inclusion outside of traditional gender binaries.

These paintings also make reference to Marcel Duchamp and his alter ego Rrose Sélavy. The character of “Rose” was Duchamp’s project to destabilise the viewer’s perception of him as an artist. By becoming “Rose,” Duchamp played with contemporary 1920s drag conventions and by adopting a woman’s persona, Duchamp undermined the normal male or ‘heroic’ connection between the artist and his work. “Rrose Sélavy,” (“The erotic is life”) proposes that the sexual power of an artist might not necessarily come from an Orphic tradition, and that the origins of both artistic creation and sex are more fluid. For this exhibition Green has instead flipped the gender of the sitter, suggesting that the role of the society doyenne is equally as fluid.

When making these paintings Jonny Green has used a combination of digital collage and artificial intelligence to re-gender these sitters. However, he has intentionally avoided satire and he has struggled to make his sitters sympathetic and avoid any sense that they may appear ridiculous or funny. The resulting pictures look right and natural and appear to exist as society portraits that co-exist with and within their age. They are a playful look, and antidote to the emerging far right politics that seek to re-write the history of a more fluid time and place and instead offer a playful glimpse into a world of freedom that might have existed behind closed doors, but that began to change both art and society into the world we know today.



Jonny Green, Fagan Slum Landlord, 2021,



Jonny Green, Lady Speyer, 2021