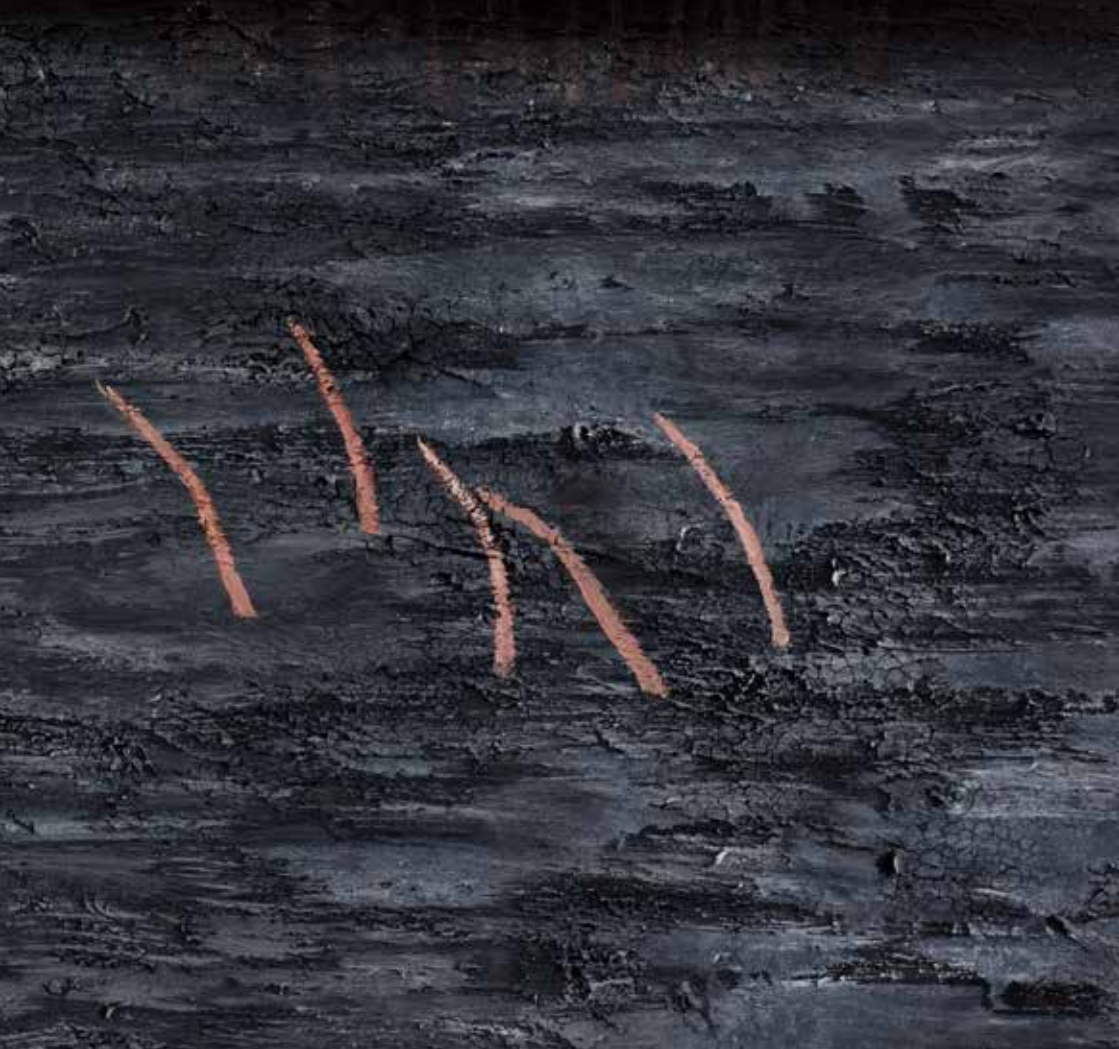


**Oliver
Gosling**

*Touching
Space*



Oliver Gosling

Touching Space

14—22 December 2022
The Fitzrovia Gallery





Reclamation
2022
Oil on canvas
155x210cm

Passage
2022
Oil on canvas
55x210cm



Crossing
2020
Oil, pearlescent silver
pigments, resin on canvas
100x150cm





Resilience
2020
Oil, pigments, resin,
emulsion on canvas
92x122cm



Reflection
2019
Oil on canvas
92x122cm



Seepage
2022
Oil on canvas

Stand
2022
Oil on canvas
92x122cm

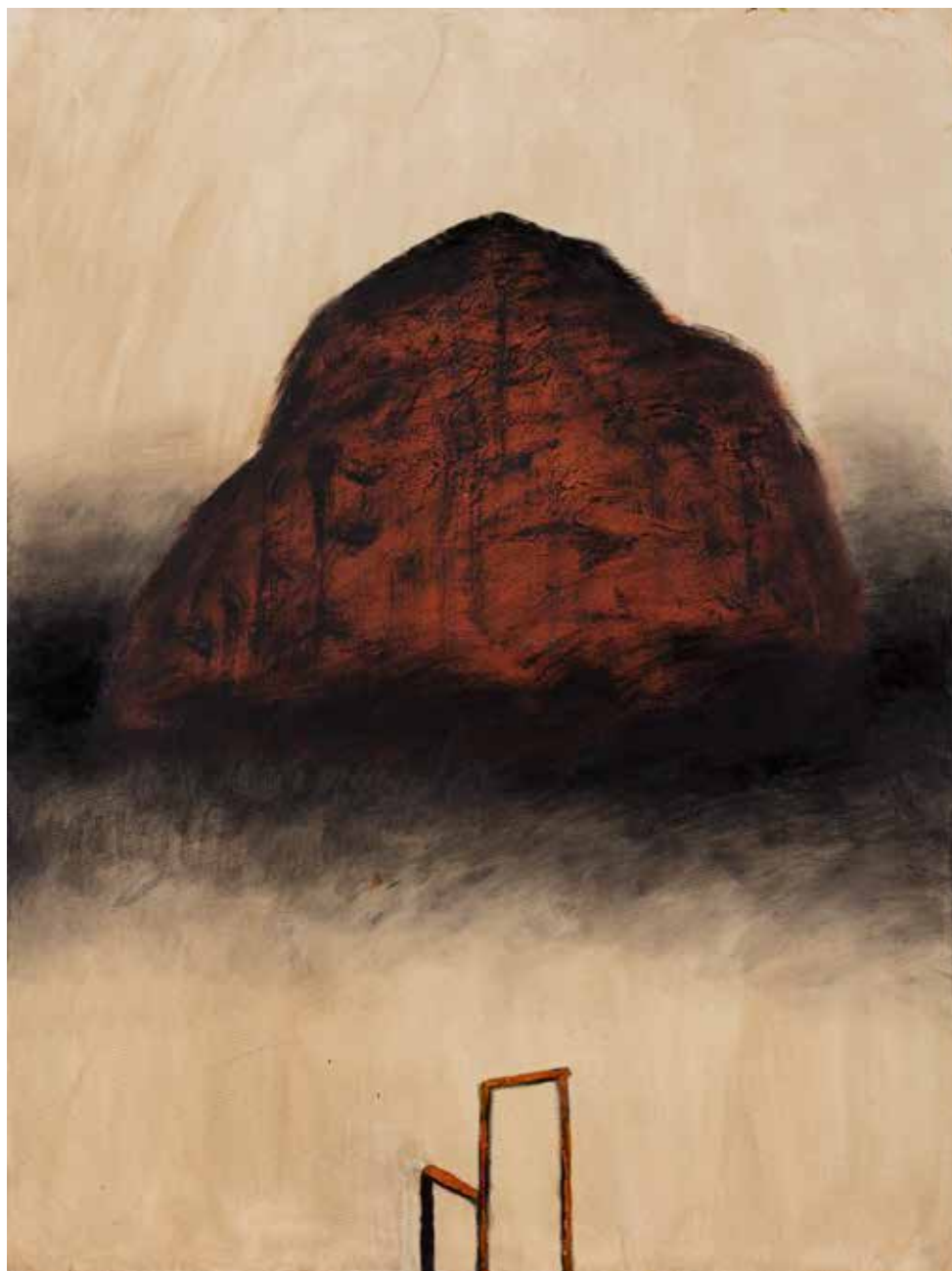




Inching
2020
Oil, pigments, resin,
emulsion on canvas
76x92cm



Entry
2017
Oil, graphite pigment,
resin on canvas
76x92cm



Conversing
2021
Oil on canvas
122x92cm

On Touching Space

Alistair Hicks

'I' have always presumptuously assumed that I can travel from one culture to the next, without too much trouble. Now there are places, some of which I have called my home, that when people land they have to declare themselves as aliens. This of course did not stop us in the past. The travellers of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, pre-Edward Said, were excited by being perceived as alien and learning more about the Other: there were Westerners that wanted to explore the Exotic Orient, and vice versa, those who wished to travel West to try to comprehend the strange ways of the Occidental. Oliver Gosling spent a decade in China. This does not explain the work: it just provides a context and a legacy.

After the publication of *Orientalism* in 1978 the appropriation of other cultures has increasingly become inappropriate. One side-effect of this is that the limited Cartesian vision of self has become even more strictly limited. We are only meant to make art about what we know, who we are. We must not cross the personal borders into other people's territories. Ironically the more expansive views of the self, those that view the self as part

of the communities in which they live have been squeezed out by this narrow extension of the already too linear European philosophy.

No one can deny that *Passage*, 2020, has been influenced by Oliver Gosling's stay in China. It is a painting in rich reds. It is a painting in two halves, the bottom veers to coral, the top aspires to a deep Burgundy. The line between them is more curved than we normally see the horizon and it is interrupted by an outline of a basic idea of a Chinese dwelling. It supplies shelter as there is a two sided roof, but it only has two out of its four walls. It might appear two-dimensional if it, in an echo of the whole picture, were not divided in two again. The pinky coral comes up from the floor like a fog, but this highlights the black void underneath the 'temple's' eaves.

Emil Cioran has stated that it is 'A golden rule: to leave an incomplete image of oneself.' *Passage* does this, but *Ghost*, 2012-2014, takes this further, as it shows two dwellings, in a more nocturnally divided world of black and blue. Looking at the paintings, the visitor, will probably imagine Gosling's time in China as a monkish, ascetic,

contemplative existence. Certainly the paintings act like mirrors to our incomplete image of ourselves. In looking at these works it is hard to think of ourselves as anything more or less than just part of a bigger picture.

The title *Passage* implies movement. Indeed many of Gosling's pictures refer to a path through life. There are traces of roots of the German Romantic vision of life's path which eventually loses itself in the perspective of the forest. The void under the roof in *Passage* echoes Caspar David Friedrich's abyss. The void again dominates *Crossing*. The viewer can climb up on to the road quite easily. There are only one or two steps, but harsh white washed stone way is going horizontally, trying to forever skirt that black oblivion. One could read *Entry* as 'No Entry' as the white house on its different levels could seem impenetrable, but these paintings have the scent of stage sets. As in theatre we are invited to suspend belief and then you can enter. They are stark but rich places that ask questions rather like Samuel Beckett in *Waiting for Godot*.

Once the audience is up on Gosling's stage, or inside his paintings if they prefer, there are many actors

waiting to talk. It is as if one has been taken to a quiet place, specially to hear the whispers of civilisation. One of the loudest voices for the artist is Emil Cioran. 'The universal view melts things into a blur,' he warned. Maybe, his landscapes do reflect the landscapes of China, which were at one time among the worst polluted in the world. If so paintings such as *Resilience* and *Reclamation* offer a little hope of Chinese determination to heal the relationship between the environment and its tormentor.

The hut at the heart of *Passage* can look isolated in its luminous landscape. It is a slightly apart. The horizon line of black and foggy pink is at a slightly different level to the rest of the picture. A living, thinking, breathing, pulsating person, is always going to be slightly out of sync with everything else around them. They don't blur totally. The individual colours glow as in *Rothko*.

There is one concrete legacy of Gosling's time in China. Two to four graduate students from the University of Brighton are invited to do a four to six week residency in China every year.

2022

Poems

Oliver Gosling

Eavesdropping
on fleeting shadows
on life's uncertain image.

Who is it
who cares or knows?
Who can face
this eternal mirage?

Edge of being
compressed by space
on the cusp of
dissolution.

If mind is all illusion
where then is
Nature's trace?

Touching a weightless shadow.
Waiting on
being and form,
listening and
watching,
longing.

An original cry
splits from below.

Beta

Bryn James

Poor George, with his
You wouldn't happen to have seen
My childhood home,
With his I'm sure I had it somewhere round here,
Running his hands under the hot tap
Till he feels something -
A most unhappy Ambassador!

In Athens, Cairo and Johannesburg
A most gloomy presence:
Amongst the twinkling of eyes,
The tinkling of silver,
The inkling that
That which is
Is that which is not.

Poor George,
With his carelessness around real estate:
mortgage providers beware!
The vetting officers raised their eyebrows
And reached for a new pad of paper.
Autumn came,
And the usual happened.

George, someone told me
You've been hearing strange things through the radio.
Is there something we need to talk about?
Nothing which isn't there
In the repeated landscape
As far as the eye can see;
In the morose sea-salt.

TOUCHING SPACE
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Photography: Peter Abrahams

WITH MUCH THANKS TO:
Martina Larsson, Alistair Hicks, Hilary Gosling, Mark Wight,
Derek Harris, Emma Coop, Peter Abrahams, Bryn James,
Tony Benn & Michael Whelan

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