

Tanya Leighton

Press Release

Matthew Krishanu
'IMMERSE'

26 October – 7 December 2024
Preview: Friday 25 October, 6–8pm
4654 W Washington Blvd, Los Angeles

Tanya Leighton, Los Angeles is pleased to present 'Immerse', a solo exhibition by London-based artist Matthew Krishanu.

In Matthew Krishanu's 'Immerse', images blur at their seams. We are slowly submerged in fluid, dripping memories. Visions like they were forming in a dream, or becoming visible through a haze, lead us to fleeting protagonists, recollected time and sites in a state of temporariness. Under the seemingly idyllic, a range of emotional states and tensions seethe and unfold.

Krishanu divines a history foraged from memories and imagination that spans themes of family, childhood, play, and religion through a considered, exploratory language of painting. He spent his childhood in Dhaka, Bangladesh where his father worked as a Christian missionary, along with spending time in India and England. The subtropical climate and saturated colours of these places and homes mature into a distinct earthen palette with rich, assertive colours. There are barely any props or embellishments in these settings. Krishanu lets go, allowing backgrounds to become atmospheres.

Through large, translucent strokes of oil paints and solvent, he pares landscapes and settings to unfinished but perceptible measure. Thin washes fuse with bold pigments. These include the large swatches of browns for bark and landscape, greens for forests, blues for skies and water, and pastels for domestic spaces. Blue is also used in place of grey in some instances like in *Boy in Tunnel* (2024) where we see a young boy at the end of a tunnel. Did he find his way out, or is he about to walk into the darkness?

These solidly painted figures in Krishanu's paintings serve as "entry-points". They are surrogates for us to imagine how we may occupy these times and histories. He also chooses affinity and suggestion over accuracy of form.

In *Window (Two Boys)* (2024) for example, two boys stand atop delicate wooden chairs. While one balances himself with his legs in a step, the other clenches onto the windowsill for support. They each represent nervousness and resolve in their body language. There is a calmness to the image – the curtains are still; the walls are bare and the tree in the distance is barren like it were autumn. There is an urgency, as though the moment he is attempting to record will slip by or become compromised. The resultant sparseness then is both calming and unsettling.

It is one of those few works where the artist lets the intimacy of a domestic space spill into the expanse of the open landscape. Through this painting we are also introduced to the two kinds of protagonists in Krishanu's work – the ones that look you in the eyes, and the ones that look away in contemplation. This can refer to the inward gaze of one's thoughts and the outward gaze of worldly perceptions and the tensions between the two.

The two boys also recur in *Sofa (Two Boys, Cornwall)* (2024), where they have awkwardly fallen asleep on a couch, exhausted from a whole day's play perhaps. Vulnerable in their sleep, they are safe and warm in the comfort of this home.

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While one's feet are perched on a stool, the other's dangle off the edge of the furniture. These small details offer us a sensation of precarity; and the states of suspension and finding firm ground.

Children at play – climbing trees and swimming in natural pools in this case – have become recurring visual and conceptual devices. Borrowed from the artist's childhood memories, and invoking leisure on the surface, a closer examination tells us another story. In *Banyan (Vines)* (2024), the boy is painted to the corner of the frame, almost lost in a dense latticework of thick branches. Krishanu also offers us two conditions in *Four Poster Bed (Boy and Fan)* and *Girl in Forest* (both 2024). They present a sensation of being on the edge or on the threshold of something new. There is an undercurrent of loneliness, or is it solitude?

The direct gaze in *Boy in Puddle* (2024), one of the larger works in the exhibition tenders a few readings. These include surrendering to the situation, or undertones of panic and/or waiting on someone to be rescued. These ambiguities are the core of Krishanu's work that bring us, temporarily so, to the intimate lives of people, their emotions and relationships. And in that we are to find ourselves, thinking about and feeling for them.

Immersion then means many things: the lushness of a grove of imposing trees or a mesh of branches, the depth of a cave, the eyes of a protagonist or even the states of learning, leisure, and rest. It is a state of prayer and an attempt at healing. It is also darkness and light, metaphor and corporeality. As his protagonists watch us, or look away in contemplation or resolve, Krishanu's backgrounds continue to blur in our mind, leading us to an intimacy and focus on person, place, event, and time.

– Mario D'Souza

Matthew Krishanu (born in 1980, Bradford, England) lives and works in London. Krishanu's major solo exhibition, 'The Bough Breaks', ran at Camden Art Centre in London from April to June 2024.

Other solo exhibitions include Tanya Leighton, Berlin; LGDR, New York; Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai; Institute for International Visual Arts, London; Midlands Art Centre, Birmingham; Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; and Huddersfield Gallery, Huddersfield.

His work has also been included in group exhibitions such as 'Life Is More Important Than Art' at Whitechapel Gallery, London in 2023; 'Prophecy' at Warwick Arts Centre, Coventry in 2022; 'Mixing It Up: Painting Today' at the Hayward Gallery, London in 2021; 'Everyday Heroes' at Southbank Centre, London in 2020; 'Childhood Now' at Compton Verney, Warwickshire, and 'Made in Britain', National Museum in Gdańsk, Poland both in 2019.

Krishanu's work is part of numerous permanent collections including Tate Modern, London; the Government Art Collection of the United Kingdom; the Arts Council Collection, London; Central Saint Martins (UAL), London; Jiangsu Art Museum, Nanjing; Sixi Museum, Nanjing; Kiran Nadar Art Museum, New Delhi, and Komechak Art Gallery, Chicago.

For more information and high-resolution images please contact info@tanyaleighton.com.

The gallery is open Wednesday– Saturday, 11am–5pm and by appointment.

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