

OLIVIA PARKES

(b. 1989) is a British-American artist and writer based in Berlin.

Artist's Statement

I make paintings that conjure an uncanny fever-bright world, a place that is both familiar and strange. My references include old crime tabloids, horror or sci-fi fan magazines, Western comics, illustrated atlases, and Art History catalogues. My paintings digest and regurgitate images. Finally, they metabolize them and take on a life of their own.

My academic background is in Art History and my practice hinges on the idea that the way we depict the world changes the way it is seen. With structure, subject, and style, my paintings explore modes and conventions of image-making, particularly where they form a feedback loop between representation and perception (historical, political, ontological), or between entertainment and reality.

Often, I draw on the West or Western. The genre's mystification of myth and history, as well as its use of stock tropes and images to construct stories in a familiar frame, has always fed my work.

My series "The Zone" draws on stylizations of the West in comics, cinema, and video games to create imagined landscapes that are both devoid of life and a kind of living body themselves: a place we have made that has taken on its own life.

I paint on black-primed board; edges or frames that remain around the images refer to both film strips and early panel painting: image as insubstantial light and image as object. Often these areas retain stray marks where I have mixed or tested color. My paintings tease the border between image and experience, object and energy, figuration and abstraction. My series "Time to Run" reimagines spaces from religious paintings depicting miracles, staging scenes that instead depict the moments before or after an ambiguous disaster. What are these figures running from, and what happens when they leave the frame? Narratives emerge through symbols and cues in the process of painting: a curtain, a clock, a crack of light beneath a door.

The works capture an anxiety that is both existential and a product of capitalism: Time is running out, and the show must go on. By presenting an expansive and layered temporality, the paintings aim to disrupt linear notions of time as progress and invite the viewer to feel time differently, to imagine alternative temporalities that might emerge from a sense of crisis. In this cultural moment, I think a lot about duration, particularly the duration of looking, and this is why I turn to painting again and again. These images unfold over time, offering the potential to experience how moments become duration and how the contemporary is timeless.

Text written by Stefano Castelli for the exhibition “NEU. New Artists from Berlin” at C + N Canepaneri Gallery, Milan

“The paintings by Olivia Parkes have two souls, one more intimate and one more expressive and uncannier. His elegant touch, expertly stylized, is reminiscent of West coast art from the Sixties and the Seventies, but strongly revisited. What remains of it is the mix of underground style, contestation, surreal and lyric aspects. Parkes’ series of paintings pretend to create a narration, freezing it in suspended atmospheres. Her characters are at the same time specific and typical; her sceneries, often nocturnal, are mirroring reality while at the same time representing alternative places in which take refuge, between reassurance and subtle disquieting atmospheres. These works give birth to an anarchic version of American myth so strongly cultivated by cinema, literature and popular culture, while clearly defined shades of European culture are also included.”

ARTWORKS



The Hunt, 2021

Oil on rag board
73,5 x 101 cm



Flight, 2021
Oil on rag board
68,5 x 103 cm



Judith, 2021
Oil on wood
57 x 42,5 cm



Killing Time, 2021

Oil on wood
69,5 x 52 cm



Wherever You Go There You Are, 2021

Oil on rag board

63,5 x 96 cm



***Vanity*, 2020**
Oil on rag board
81 x 102 cm



Temperance - Have your cake, 2020

Oil on rag board
76 x 101 cm



Hand Land, 2020

Oil on rag board

44 x 58 cm



Can't Find the Words, 2020

Oil on rag board

73.5 x 58 cm



Cake After Rain, 2020,
Oil on rag board
45 x 67 cm



Courtesy: The artist, MOUNTAINS Berlin

Autobiography Of Red, 2019

Oil on rag board

42 x 59 cm



Courtesy: The artist, MOUNTAINS Berlin

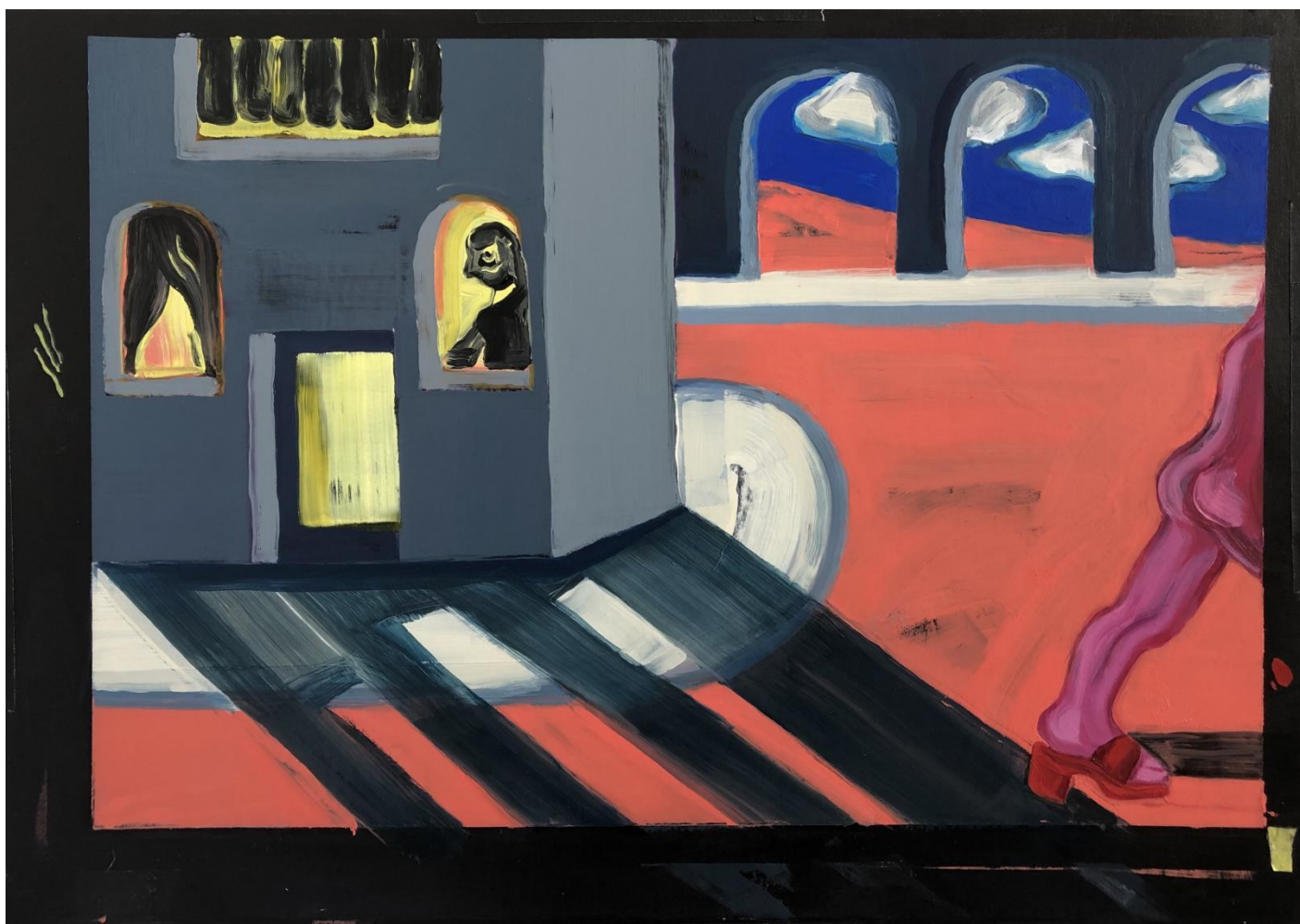
Time To Burn, 2018

Oil on rag board
45 x 64.5 cm



Courtesy: The artist, MOUNTAINS Berlin

Time to Run, 2018,
Oil on rag board
42 x 59 cm



Courtesy: The artist, MOUNTAINS Berlin

Night And Day, 2019

Oil on rag board

42 x 59.3 cm



Courtesy: The artist, MOUNTAINS Berlin

I'll Walk Through A Wall If You Give Me A Door , 2019

oil on rag board

42 x 59.3 cm



Courtesy: The artist, MOUNTAINS Berlin

Relax, 2019
Oil on rag board
30.2 x 40.2 cm



Beep Beep, 2019

Oil on canvas

25 x 30 cm



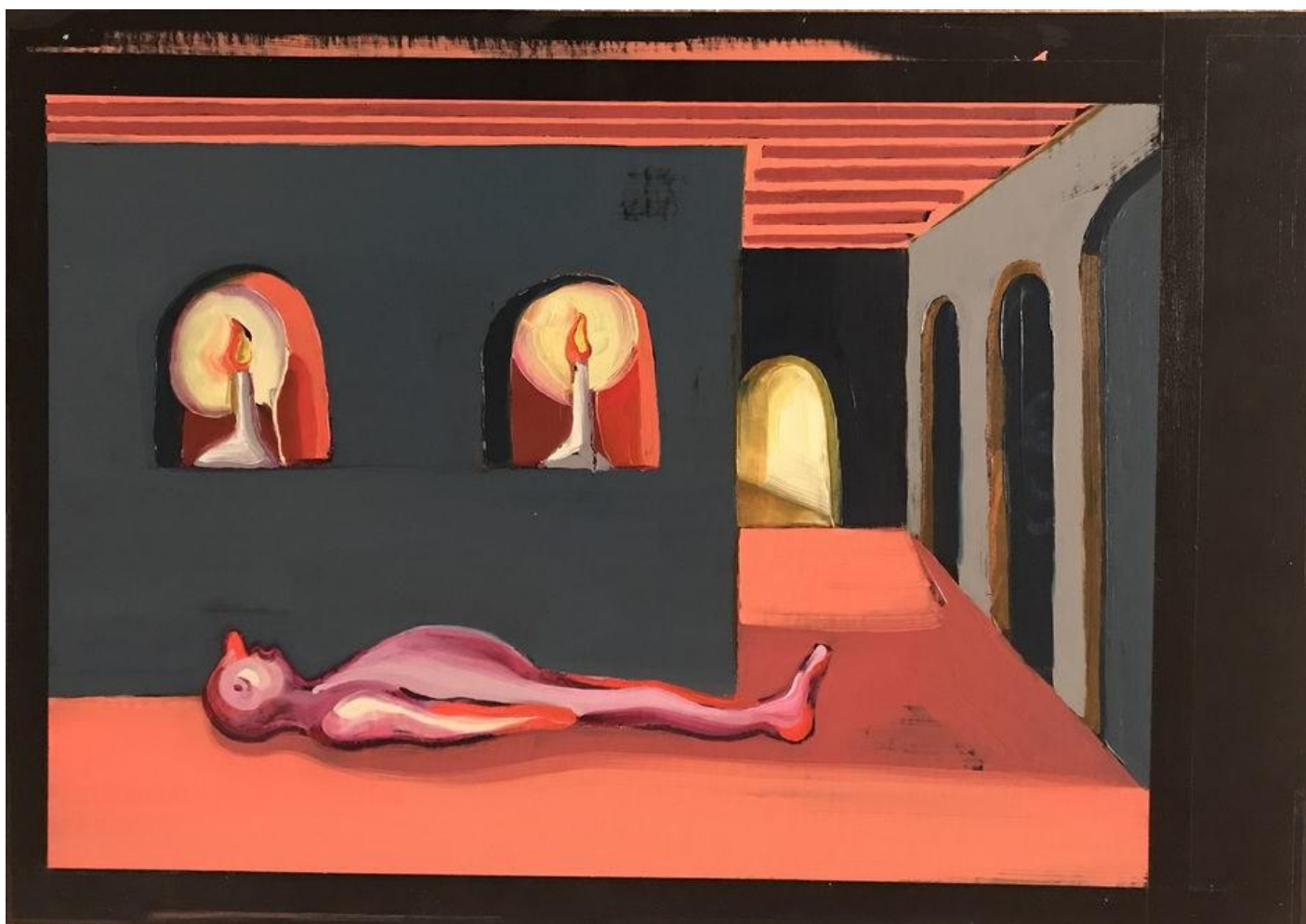
Your Heart Will Hunt You Down, 2019

Oil on canvas
25 x 30 cm



Take Best Care, 2019

Oil on canvas
40 x 30 cm



Courtesy: The artist, MOUNTAINS Berlin

Departure, 2018

Oil on rag board
41.6 x 59.3 cm