

EXHIBITIONS Christopher McVinish *Theatre of the Street* 26th May 2015 - 13th June 2015



Just as Caspar David Friedrich depicted his figures turned, observing the animated wilderness of their natural surrounds and Jeffrey Smart juxtaposed his characters as they integrated at times eerily with their stark, composed environment, Christopher McVinish documents the way we interact with the drama of the streets that line our urban reality. And just as Friedrich's characters sought moments of enlightenment and greatness by the light of a full moon or while at the mercy of the rough seas, McVinish illustrates our instinctual desires to contemplate the mysteries of our contemporary existence - amongst car parks and street lamps, between shopping centres and passing cars.



'Christopher McVinish has been crafting realist paintings for a long time. His interest has been consistently focused on building a moment of tension in the image, influenced by his long term interest in the work of American street photographers.

He describes his own camera as a sketchbook. "Getting up early while visiting a new city and trawling the streets for that elusive image is one of my great pleasures. I like finding stories - in alleyways, country towns, empty spaces", he said. Yet the paintings he creates are not faithful to place but are instead a mental image bank that fuses real people and vignettes from disparate sources. "Actual places are not important - I am interested in ambience - something outside our experience. I might use a street scene from one place, a figure from another, the story captured from somewhere else altogether."



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH

*Exit Only* 2015

oil on linen  
61cm x 91cm



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH

*Man with Pink Shopping Bag* 2015

oil on linen  
62cm x 84cm



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH

*Taylor's Motors* 2015

oil on linen  
61cm x 122cm



Street scenes, a modest house compressed under a sky weighty with clouds, a carpark entry with its road foreground, figures in the landscape and moments of human interaction are distilled with a filmic sensibility, an enigmatic narrative that teases at the viewer's interest in identifying its character, location or story. Our involvement is intrinsically related to this engagement, but also the developed atmospherics and compositional tension contained within the painting. Clouds may build in a big sky - a darkening nimbus, sunlit cumulous - or a clear sky, white-hot with dust. The people that inhabit these imagined places are also curiously indefinable, yet speak to a universal ideal.



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH  
*Closing Scene* 2015  
oil on linen  
122cm x 83cm



While McVinish has had significant success with portraiture, his vision is most succinctly expressed in these narratives. While the subject of *The Visitor* (2014) is, ostensibly, a modest 1960s dwelling, it is directed through the portrait of a man in the foreground. He stands divided from the house by the road, and looks over the roof at a lit sky which is strangely shadowed from the bottom of the cloud. The sky dominates the composition, yet our eye is compelled into the shadows around the house. *Exit Only* (2015) operates like a Renaissance perspective study, with the road and car-park entry pressed into the foreground, while the shadowy ramps draw us into the depths of the image.



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH  
*The Visitor* 2014  
oil on linen  
112cm x 112cm



Conceptually, in McVinish's paintings there is the sense that we are on the cusp of something - a break-down or break-through - humanity on the brink perhaps. They express an imminence, although whether this be benign or malignant is dependent on your point of view. "I am showing what may be beneath the surface, the potential apocalypse in current events. All that is unfolding globally - climate change, political unrest, economic instability - might indicate that, while we are mired in the world of technology, the physical world around us is collapsing."

In these paintings of the "theatre of the street", the artist's influences - from painters Edward Hopper to Canadian realist Alex Colville, films by Wim Wenders and photographers Gregory Crewdson to Stephen Shore - are evident. Yet in their subtly lit and restrained portraits of people and narratives from places on the fringes - they make the enigmatic vignette of the



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH  
*Doorway* 2015  
oil on linen  
51cm x 61cm



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH  
*Signs* 2015  
oil on linen

moment their own.'

Essay by Louise Martin-Chew, 2015.



**Christopher McVinish** has been a finalist in many awards including the Mosman Art Prize, the Eutick Memorial Still Life Award, the Tattersall's Landscape Prize, the Archibald Prize, and the Salon des Refuses. His work is represented in public and university collections including the Tweed Regional Gallery Collection, the Toowoomba City Council, Gold Coast Council, Redcliffe City Council, Griffith University, Swinburne University of Technology, the University of Queensland Press, the University of the Sunshine Coast and the Australasian Royal College of Surgeons.

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62cm x 92cm



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH  
*39 Levels of Luxury* 2015  
oil on canvas  
61cm x 76cm



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH  
*Fire Exit* 2015  
oil on canvas  
50cm x 76cm



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH  
*Destination* 2015  
oil on canvas  
50cm x 76cm



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH  
*Another Summers Day* 2014  
oil on linen  
81cm x 71cm



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH  
*The Discussion* 2015  
oil on linen  
76cm x 61cm



CHRISTOPHER MCVINISH  
*The Appointment* 2014  
oil on linen  
111cm x 76cm