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YEOWORKSHOP



JUSTIN LOKE



JUSTIN LOKE

Justin Loke (b. 1979, Singapore) is a multidisciplinary artist and curator. He is the director of Vertical Submarine, an art collective acclaimed for their interdisciplinary projects that blend art installation, painting, theatre and curating, focusing on storytelling through words and images. Loke's notable achievements include receiving the JCCI Japan Foundation Arts Award in 2009. He was the creative director and writer for the Singapore Night Festival 2022's highlight act, *Cathay Hotel: The Curse of The Missing Red Shoe*. In 2023, he curated Benchmarks, a placemaking initiative commissioned by the Civic District Alliance.

Recently, he completed an artist residency and exhibition at Points Center for Contemporary Arts in Shanghai-Suzhou, organised by the Troy Foundation (London), curated *Creative Intersections: Traces of Dragons* at Funan Mall, and *8-Bit Word Cloud*, a public art installation for National Art Gallery of Singapore's Light to Night Festival for Singapore Art Week 2024. Vertical Submarine has earned numerous awards including The President's Young Talent Award (Singapore, 2009), The Celeste Prize (New York, 2011), and a finalist position for the Sovereign Asian Art Prize (Hong Kong, 2015).

(VERTICAL SUBMARINE)

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Justin Loke

Unarmed Chair: Broken Window Fallacy, 2026

Brass Plate, Acid, 12 Bore/ 12-gauge shotgun, 00-buck cartridges, on Armchair (Cow Leather) in Glass Display Cabinet (from recycled Teakwood of old, broken windows and doors)

120 x 110 x 160 cm

Unique



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This sculpture is part of Justin Loke's ongoing *Unarmed Chair* series, which investigates what remains of an object once its utility is broken. By subjecting a comforting piece of furniture to abuse and damage, Loke pushes the chair beyond function and into another form of visibility. He references the economic theory Broken Window Fallacy, which notes that damage presented as improvement conceals underlying loss. In this work, apparent harm serves to expose the underlying structures and assumptions that previously remained concealed by the object's usefulness.

In everyday life, a chair hides behind its purpose; we notice only what it does, not what it is.

Here, once the chair can no longer serve its function, it finally presents itself as a thing: its meaning no longer concealed by usefulness. In an art show devoted to making and creating, Loke turns to unmaking as its necessary counterpart.



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Justin Loke

Unarmed Chair: Explaining the Broken English of Butcher Ding, 2025

Wooden chair, new and used choppers

95 x 90 x 128 cm

Chair Dimensions: 47 x 46 x 100 cm

Edition of 3



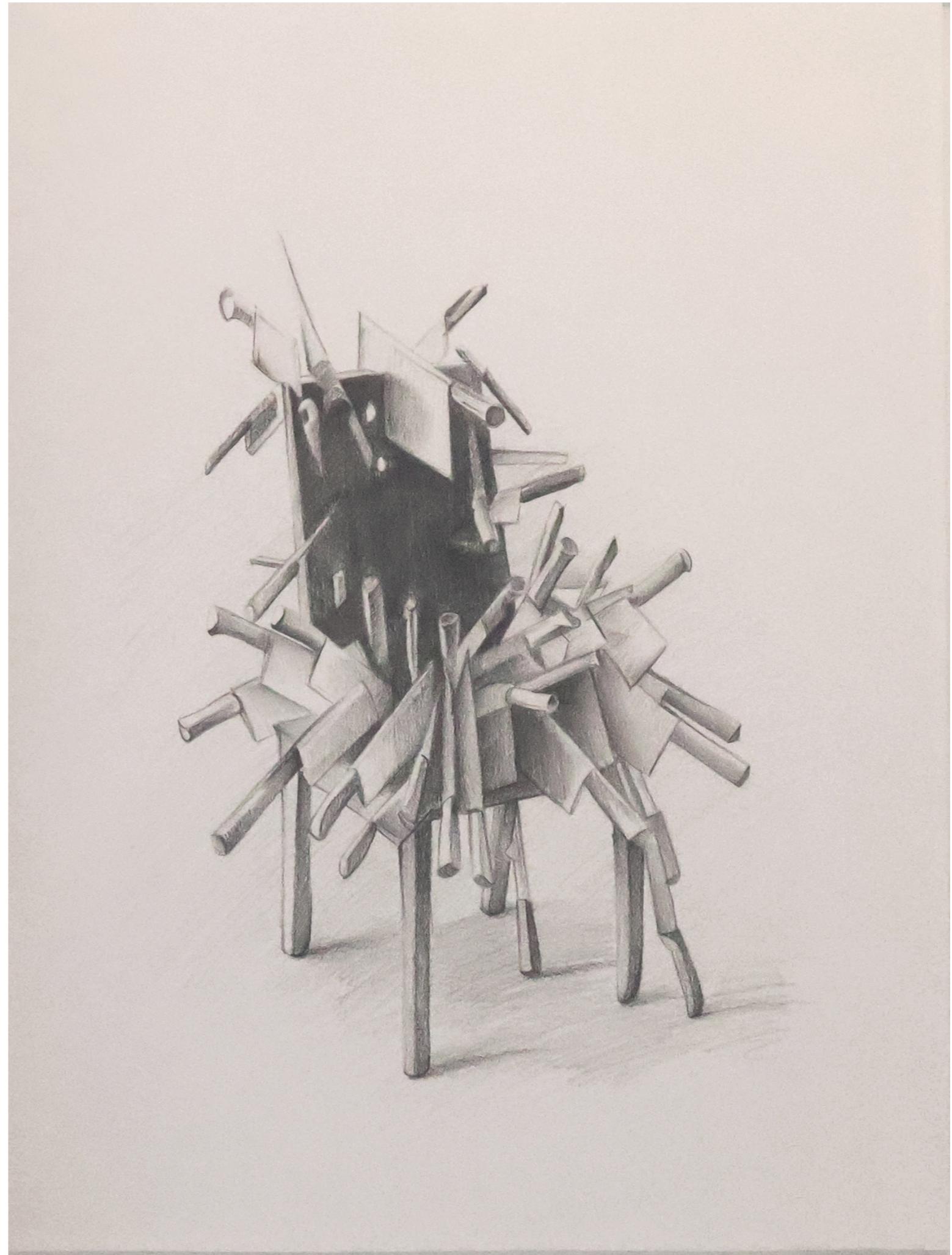
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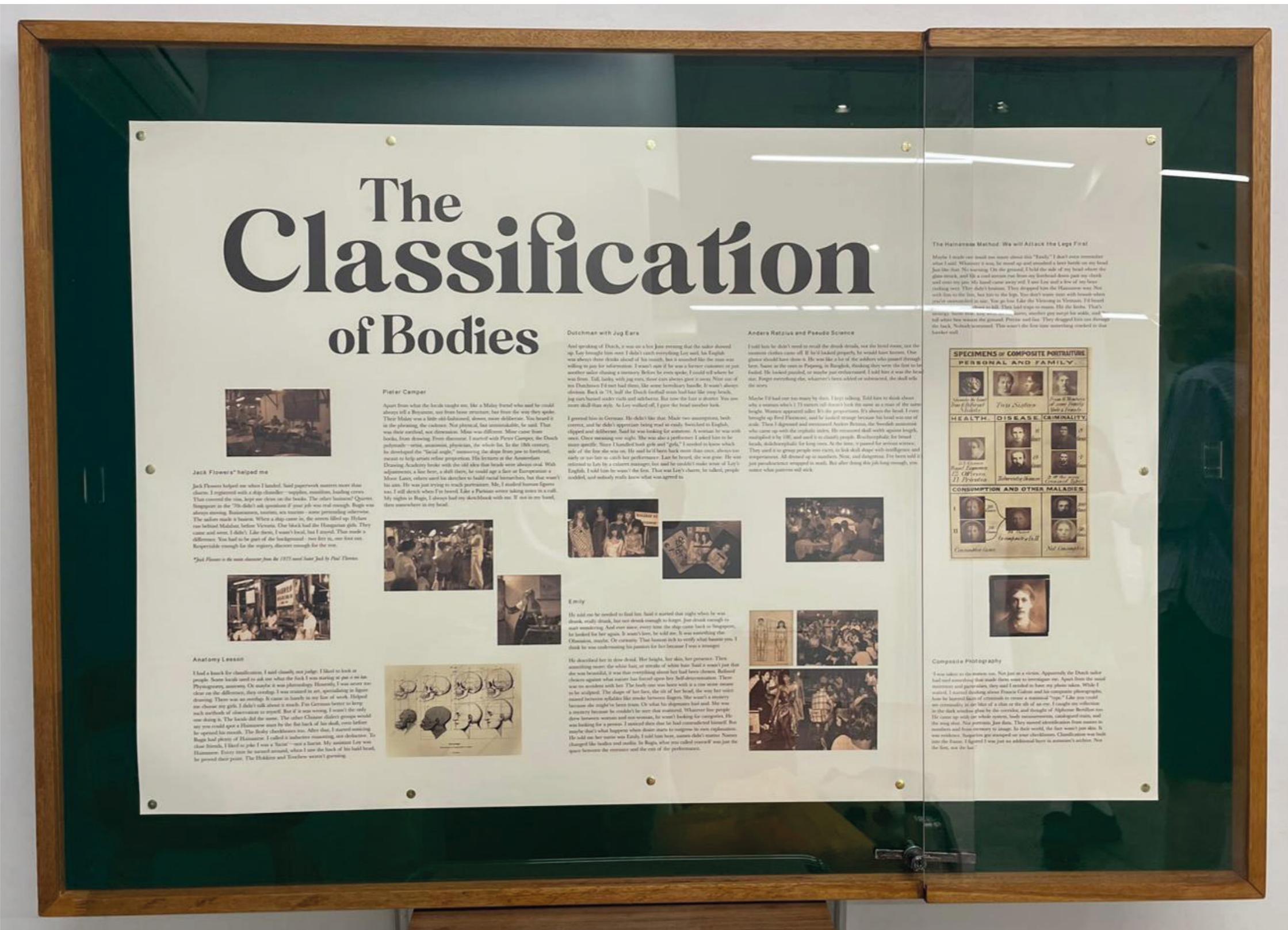


Justin Loke
Unarmed Chair I, 2025
pencil on paper
56 x 43 cm

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Justin Loke
Unarmed Chair V, 2025
Pencil on paper
56 x 43 cm





Justin Loke
The Classification of Bodies, 2025
misaligned notice board with print on archival paper
(Durevole Conservation cotton paper 400 gsm)
140 x 100 cm (framed); 120 x 80 cm (print)
Edition of 3

Y

of Bodies

The Classification of Bodies unfolds through the voice of a German expatriate living in 1970s Bugis Street, Singapore. Officially registered as a ship chandler, he operates quietly as a pimp, navigating the city's underbelly with the calculated eye of a former art student trained in human anatomy.

Obsessed with categorisation, he applies the outdated sciences of physiognomy and forensic photography to the people he encounters. Across a backdrop of open drains, cabaret neon, and transient bodies, he meets a Dutch sailor in search of a performer. The sailor's memory, part desire, part obsession, unravels easy definitions of gender and identity.



ers* helped me

helped me when I landed. Said paperwork matters more than tered with a ship chandler—supplies, manifests, loading crews. the visa, kept me clean on the books. The other business? Quieter. he '70s didn't ask questions if your job was real enough. Bugis was g. Businessmen, tourists, sex tourists - some pretending otherwise. ade it busiest. When a ship came in, the streets filled up. Hylam alabar, before Victoria. Our block had the Hungarian girls. They it. I didn't. Like them, I wasn't local, but I stayed. That made a u had to be part of the background - two feet in, one foot out. nough for the registry, discreet enough for the rest.

*s the main character from the 1973 novel *Saint Jack* by Paul Theroux.*



lesson

for classification. I said classify, not judge. I liked to look at locals used to ask me what the fuck I was staring at *qua si mi lan*. anatomy. Or maybe it was phrenology. Honestly, I was never too difference, they overlap. I was trained in art, specialising in figure re was an overlap. It came in handy in my line of work. Helped girls. I didn't talk about it much. I'm German better to keep of observation to myself. But if it was wrong, I wasn't the only The locals did the same. The other Chinese dialect groups would spot a Hainanese man by the flat back of his skull, even before mouth. The fleshy cheekbones too. After that, I started noticing nty of Hainanese. I called it inductive reasoning, not deductive. To I liked to joke I was a 'facist'—not a fascist. My assistant Loy was very time he turned around, when I saw the back of his bald head, ir point. The Hokkien and Teochew weren't guessing.

Pieter Camper

Apart from what the locals taught me, like a Malay friend who said he could always tell a Boyanese, not from bone structure, but from the way they spoke. Their Malay was a little old-fashioned, slower, more deliberate. You heard it in the phrasing, the cadence. Not physical, but unmistakable, he said. That was their method, not dimension. Mine was different. Mine came from books, from drawing. From discourse. I started with Pieter Camper, the Dutch polymath—artist, anatomist, physician, the whole list. In the 18th century, he developed the “facial angle,” measuring the slope from jaw to forehead, meant to help artists refine proportion. His lectures at the Amsterdam Drawing Academy broke with the old idea that heads were always oval. With adjustments, a line here, a shift there, he could age a face or Europeanize a Moor. Later, others used his sketches to build racial hierarchies, but that wasn't his aim. He was just trying to teach portraiture. Me, I studied human figures too. I still sketch when I'm bored. Like a Parisian writer taking notes in a café. My nights in Bugis, I always had my sketchbook with me. If not in my hand, then somewhere in my head.



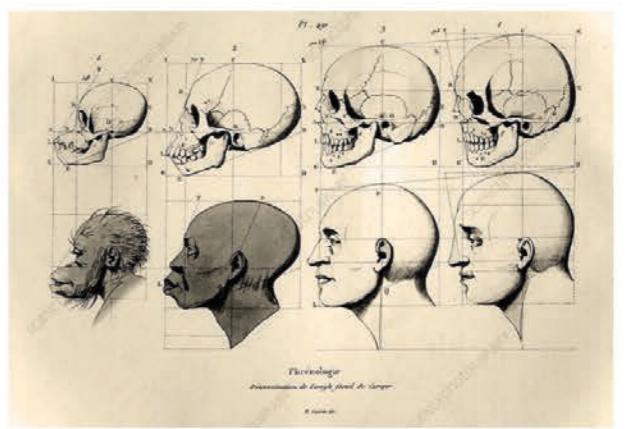
And spe up. Loy was alw willing to another was from ten Dut obvious, jug ears more sk

I greeted, correct, clipped once. O



more sp side of t early or referred English. nodded,

He told drunk, r start wo he look Obsessio think he



He desc somethi she was choices was no a to be sc moved be a myster drew be was look maybe t He told changed space be

The Classification of Bodies

A person is sitting at a desk in an office, working on a computer. The desk has papers and a keyboard. The person is wearing a dark shirt and light-colored pants. The background shows office equipment and windows.

Jack Flower's helped

Jack Flowers helped me when I landed. Bad paperhose causes more than chancery. I registered with a shop—shopkeeper—supplies, materials, tools, etc. That covered the res., kept me clean on the books. The other business? Quangoque in the '70s didn't ask questions if your job was real enough. Now we're about money. Businesses, too, ask. Some are honest; others are not. The status made it easier. When a shop came in, the men listed up by phone, came behind Molasses, Indian Vista. One block had the Hungarians go. The same went on. I didn't. Like I said, I want to be honest, but I always think you'd better be out of the business—two men, two cars, two lots.

*Paul Elmer is the main character from the 1977 novel *Smart Just by Paul Thomas*.*



Journal of Health Politics

I had a knock for classification. I said classify, no judge. I had to knock at people. Some local used to ask me who the fuck I was making a noise at. Pharyngoscopy, I think. Or maybe it was pharyngoscopy. Honestly, I was as clear on the difference, they overlap. I was not an art specialist, I was an art drawing. There was an overlap. It came as handily at my line of work. I guess we are one girl. I didn't talk about it much. For German houses to keep such methods of observation to myself. But if it was wrong, I would be doing it. The locals did the same. The when Chinese shakers played, you may think you could a Hammerman from the first look of his skin, but before he opened his mouth, the flesh clearly changed. After that, I noticed nothing else about him. I liked to joke he was a "Sister" - not a foster, but Hammerman. Every time he turned around, when I saw the back of his head, he turned his point. The Hokkien and Teochew women's gowns



Data written with `log.Ears`

And speaking of Dr. Drexel, it was on a bus June morning that the older doctor stopped. Lucy thought he must have stopped because Lucy was late. Mr. English was always there, about three blocks ahead of Lucy, and he looked like for sure was willing to go for a ride.

Another older清楚ing is imminent. Below are some quotes. I would add quotes for more people. "All kinds" would bring these lines more clearly to mind. "Some men and women have a lot to live for, but others have little or nothing to live for."

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I guess we are German, the native language, I am not, and he didn't appreciate being asked to study. So here I am in Holland, I slipped away, I didn't know what to do, he was looking for motivation. I wanted to be an easy case. Cleaning out my room, he said, "Are you a professor?" I wanted him to be more specific. Since I had broken both legs and "spills," I needed to know which side of the line she was on. He said "No, we have to come back over here, and when we return we can catch her professorship." Last night I heard a man sing "Wee Willie Winkie" as a lullaby, and he could sing it in either side of Leo's English. I will tell her, for her love. That was Leo's choice, he decided, people who work with him were to be agreed on.



He was too weak to stand but had a mated for eight when he was struck, really drunk, but not drunk enough to stagger. Just drunk enough to start wondering. Dead now, won't move even the ship came back to Sagamore.



interventions. Philanthropy
was critical to the success of the project, and the
interventions are now being replicated in other countries.
I would like to thank Dr. Bruce L. Johnson for his
use of his personal knowledge, documents and
interventions to help us at a time when
the world was in crisis. I would like to thank
him once again for his tremendous support. Both
a long time friend and colleague, he is a
true professional and a true leader. He
is a role model for us all. I would like to thank
you all for your support and for your interest in
the project. I would like to thank Dr. Bruce L. Johnson for his

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The Lamplighter



In 1999, an art student at a colonial-era building on Upper Wilkie Road, a former Japanese Consulate repurposed as an art school campus, heard a passing remark from a lecturer: the building was haunted because the Japanese army had killed a Jew there, or perhaps an entire Jewish family. There were also accounts from classmates that seemed to confirm the haunting, with one claiming to have felt a touch on his face when he was alone in the painting studio early one morning. The student later learned that the lecturer John had a quiet obsession with local ghost stories, and kept an archive of old newspaper clippings whenever such tales were still considered newsworthy.

One day, the student noticed the Star of David symbol still faintly visible on the façade of some old shophouses down the hill. The school's admin clerk, coincidentally named David, had a habit of showing up whenever the life drawing class featured a nude model. The rest of the mostly female class would wordlessly position their easels to block his view. The student dismissed the haunting story as one of many post-war legends, shaped by inherited trauma and the stereotype of the murderous Japanese. He thought about how rumours and legends formed part of the stories about places, like memories in contrast to historical narratives.



Over the years, the building remained humid and creaking, marked by unintentional pauses. The student recalled a passage he read about how images contain three temporal frames: the moment it depicts, the moment it is made, and the moment it is viewed.

He began to wonder if legends too were marked by three layers of time: the moment in the past they described, the day they were told, and the moment that day itself is remembered. Each layer is slightly misaligned, like a photograph exposed three times onto the same surface, never quite settling into a clear delineation. And perhaps the same could be said of all memories, recollections and forgotten histories.

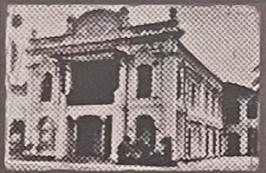
Back in the 1930s, Ezra, a Baghdadi Jewish man living in the vicinity near Middle Road, observed from his window the evening gas lamplighter on his usual rounds.

At that time, many quarters in Singapore were still not lit by electric lamps, relying instead on gas lamps to light the streets after dusk. Ezra was accustomed to seeing a Malay or Indian worker in this street though he could rarely tell their difference, a fault for which he had been quietly rebuked. That evening, the lamplighter was Chinese. Ezra wondered how at times, he could not



tell the difference between the Chinese and the Japanese in Singapore too. The flickering light of the gas lamp made him recall a meeting with the dentist Dr. Jukichi Ikeda at the Japanese Club near where Wilkie Edge now stands. They later also met at Ikeda's home at Mount Emily shortly before the house was sold to the Japanese Consulate in 1939. There were rumours, never quite confirmed, that Ikeda's ties to Tokyo ran deeper than dentistry and cavities — that he was involved, in some quiet way, with "information gathering and other activities." His decision to sell the house it was said, was not merely personal, but timed, perhaps, with certain geopolitical interests and movements quietly taking shape in the region.

Dr. Ikeda introduced Ezra to a younger Japanese man, Matsugae Kyoaki, who had studied in Germany. Their conversation turned towards light, language, and the nature of dwelling. They discussed the idea of Shekinah, the divine presence in Jewish thought that does not appear directly but is inferred through signs and absence. Matsugae remarked that, as an East Asian, he had never quite learned how to tell a European Jew apart from other Europeans. While saying this to Ezra, Matsugae recalled how, on a spring morning in a garden, he had once mistaken the shifting shadows of leaves for dirt on the face of Satoko, the girl he once loved — the 'dirt' he had tried to brush away, but could not. He then mentioned a German-Jewish man named Walter, whom he had met in Paris. Matsugae had encountered Walter during a lecture on Hegel by a Russian émigré aristocrat named Alexandre, said to be the nephew of the abstract painter Wassily Kandinsky. The event was part of the Collège de Sociologie, which organised a lecture series held every fortnight on Saturday nights in the back room of the bookstore Galeries du Livre. Like him, Walter had been there, listening in silence. Walter spoke of how Shekinah was marked not by fullness but by withdrawal, not by visibility but by trace. Dwelling, according to him, was not defined by possession but a condition shaped by exile. Presence was not something simply given but structured by its own retreat, a paradox that limns the space it vacates rather than fills. The conversation remained abstract and inconclusive. A few years later, the Japanese man heard that Walter had taken his own life in a town in the Pyrenees, a mountain range on the French-Spanish border, while fleeing from the war.



In 2025, the former art student stood once again in the same space. Now occupied by The Private Museum, he was to present a painting that resembled a floorplan, showing two adjacent domestic spaces as if viewed from above. On the left, a family home, cluttered, yet communal, alive with traces of a shared life. On the right, a bachelor's quarters, sparse, enclosed and solitary. Between them, only a single dividing wall. The picture did not show a full view of either room, only partial scenes from each. In the bachelor's room, a man stood on a chair, reaching up to change the light bulb of a wall-mounted lamp. Because of the visual ambiguity, some might have the impression that the rooms are part of the same house. From a certain angle, the act of changing a light bulb on a stool, echoes the gesture of hanging a noose.

The painting was titled *No One Lit the Lamp*. Seen in the bachelor's room is a stain on the floor, and mirrored by another on the dining table of the adjacent family unit. Whether these stains resemble a country, a continent, someone's birthmark, or simply a trace of carelessness, if not violence, is left to the viewer's imagination.



Most meanings lie beneath the surface, not seen but felt. He recalls how one might have the experience but miss the meaning, and how the approach to meaning restores the experience. Perhaps, restored in a different form, beyond meaning itself.

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Through memory, digressions, and echoes of literature and history, *The Lamplighter* gathers fragments of a vanished past in an analogical manner - inspired by Enzo Melandri's *La Linea e il Circolo* - retold through the solitary ritual of a man lighting lamps at dusk. *No One Lit the Lamp* turns inward: within the home, the glow reveals both the intimacies of domestic life between neighbours and the stains that remain under its light.

At its heart lies the story of a Baghdadi Jewish man in 1930s Singapore. His recollections ripple across time: fleeting encounters with Japanese neighbours before the war, meditations on exile and belonging, and reflections on the fragile thresholds between shadow and light, between walls and the lives divided by them, on the eve of a world soon to be torn apart by war.



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Justin Loke

No One Lit the Lamp, 2025
oil and acrylic on canvas
100 x 100 cm

No One Lit the Lamp resembles a floorplan: two adjacent domestic interiors viewed from above.

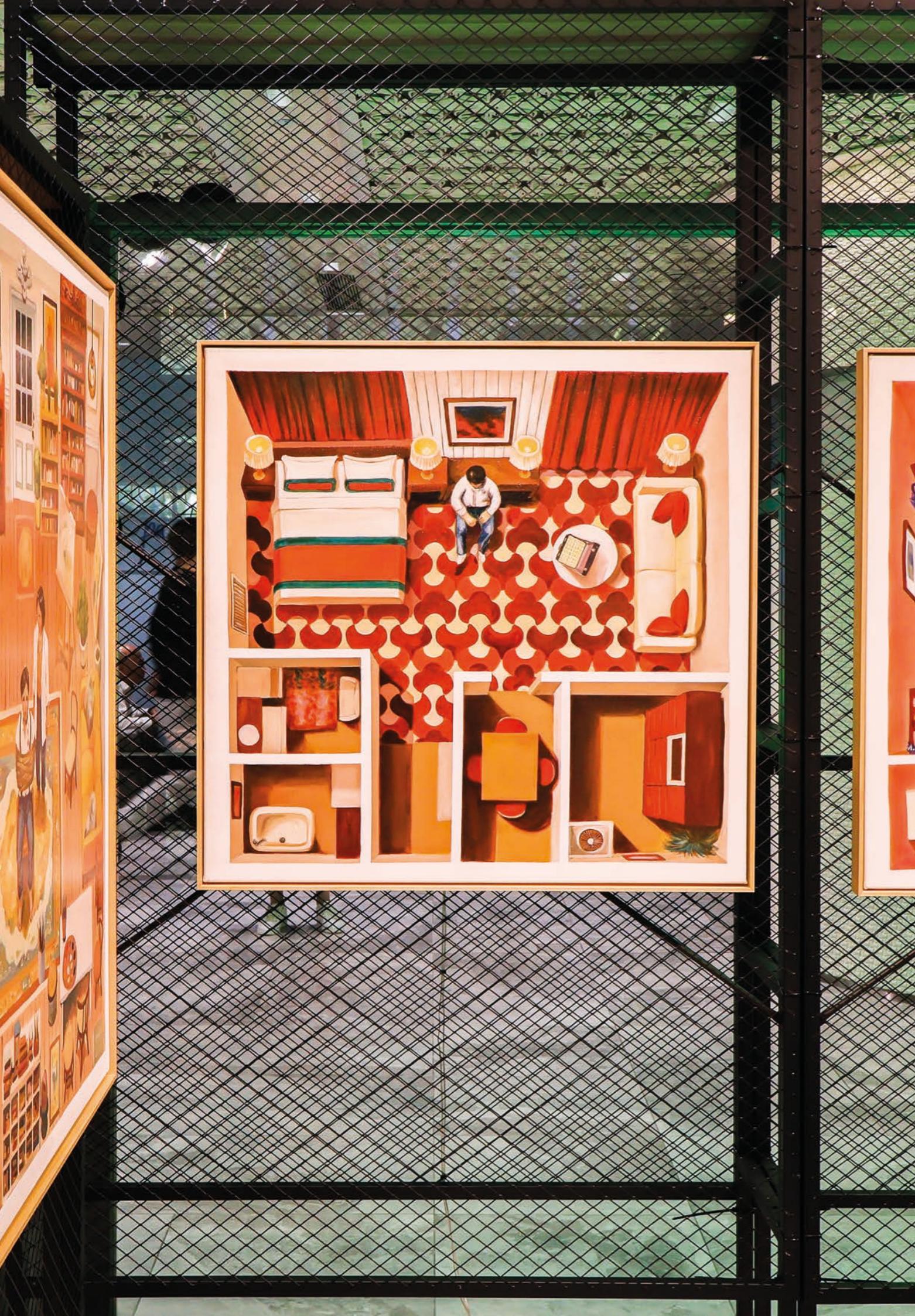
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LEAVING



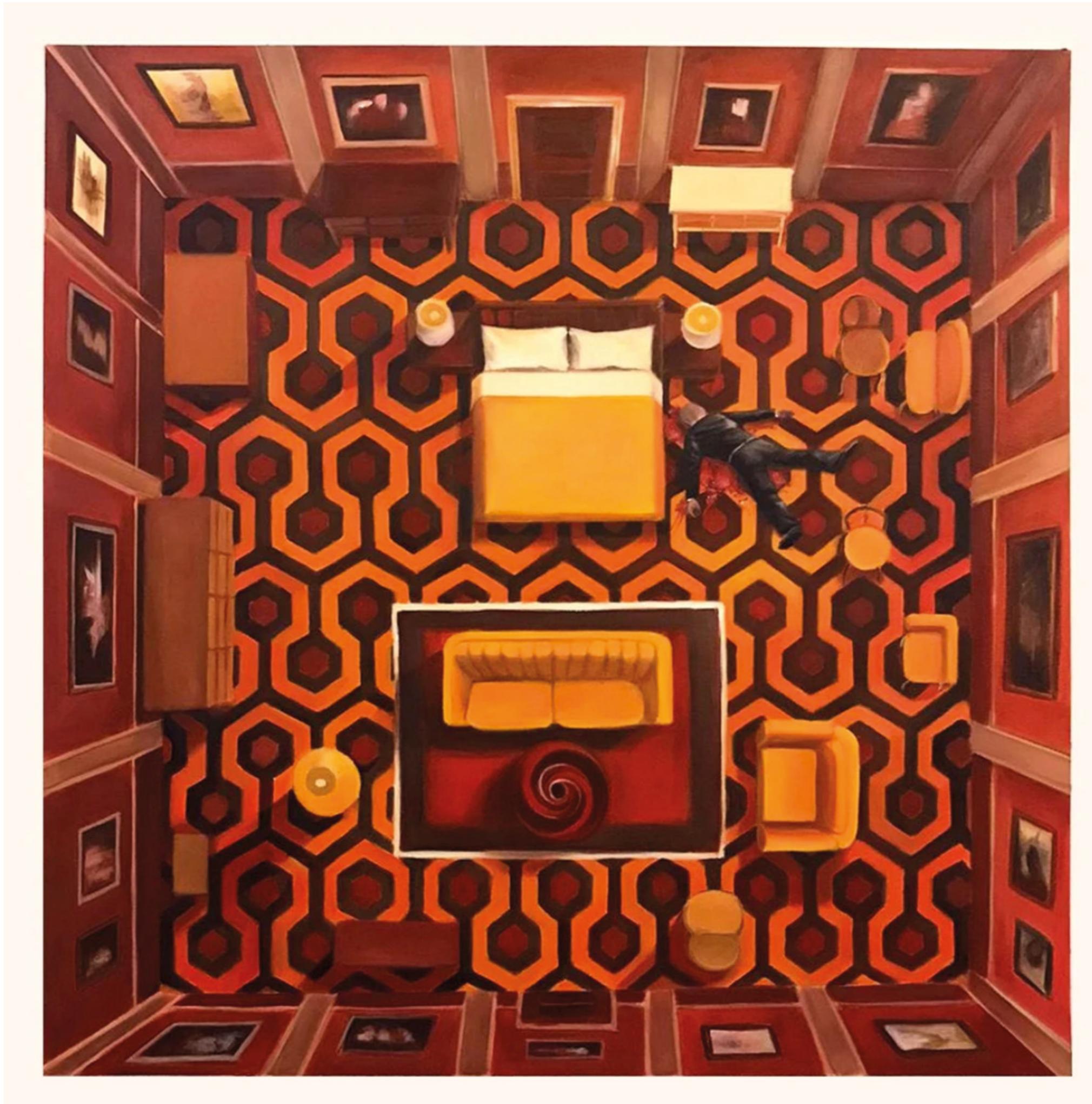
Leaving Room is a series of paintings about archetypal figures and the spaces they once occupied, with a particular focus on figures from the art world. The title itself is a play on words, intertwining "leaving" and "living," suggesting both departure and the place where life unfolds—the living room. This linguistic ambiguity invites viewers to engage with objects or pictures within pictures, forming a silent yet captivating analogical narrative.

The narrative revolves around a series of seemingly disconnected scenes, delving into the experiences of characters—or their absence—and the objects they left behind, revealing ineffable connections between them. Characters and scenes referencing books, films, theatre, and paintings are woven together to explore how, in a state of confinement, the desire to leave often surpasses the act of leaving..

ROOM

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Justin Loke
*The Body of an Art Dealer Lying in the Room
after a Meeting*, 2024
oil and acrylic on canvas
80 x 80 cm





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Justin Loke
*The Gallerist awake in his Hotel Room
during an Art Fair*, 2024
oil and acrylic on canvas
80 x 80 cm



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The Gallerist awake in his Hotel Room during an Art Fair plays on the enduring stereotype of the artist as adopts a plan view, placing both artist and viewer in the position of a voyeur.

At first glance, it seems to satirise the gallerist as a figure associated with money, but the gaze soon folds back on itself. The voyeur is not only the viewer standing before the work but also the artist who imagines the gallerist's world as one of endless transactions. In doing so, the artist forgets that both are bound by the same logic of buying and selling, each anxious within the machinery of the market economy - nobody is spared from it.

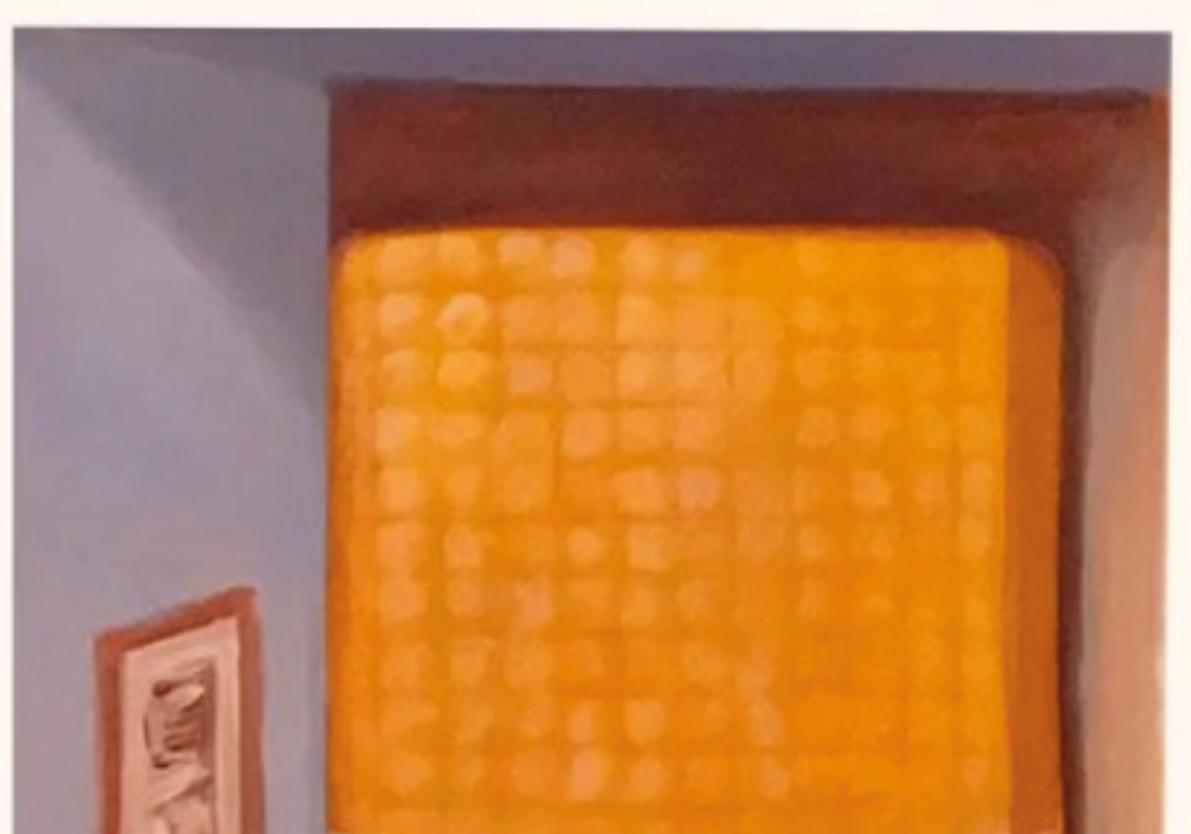
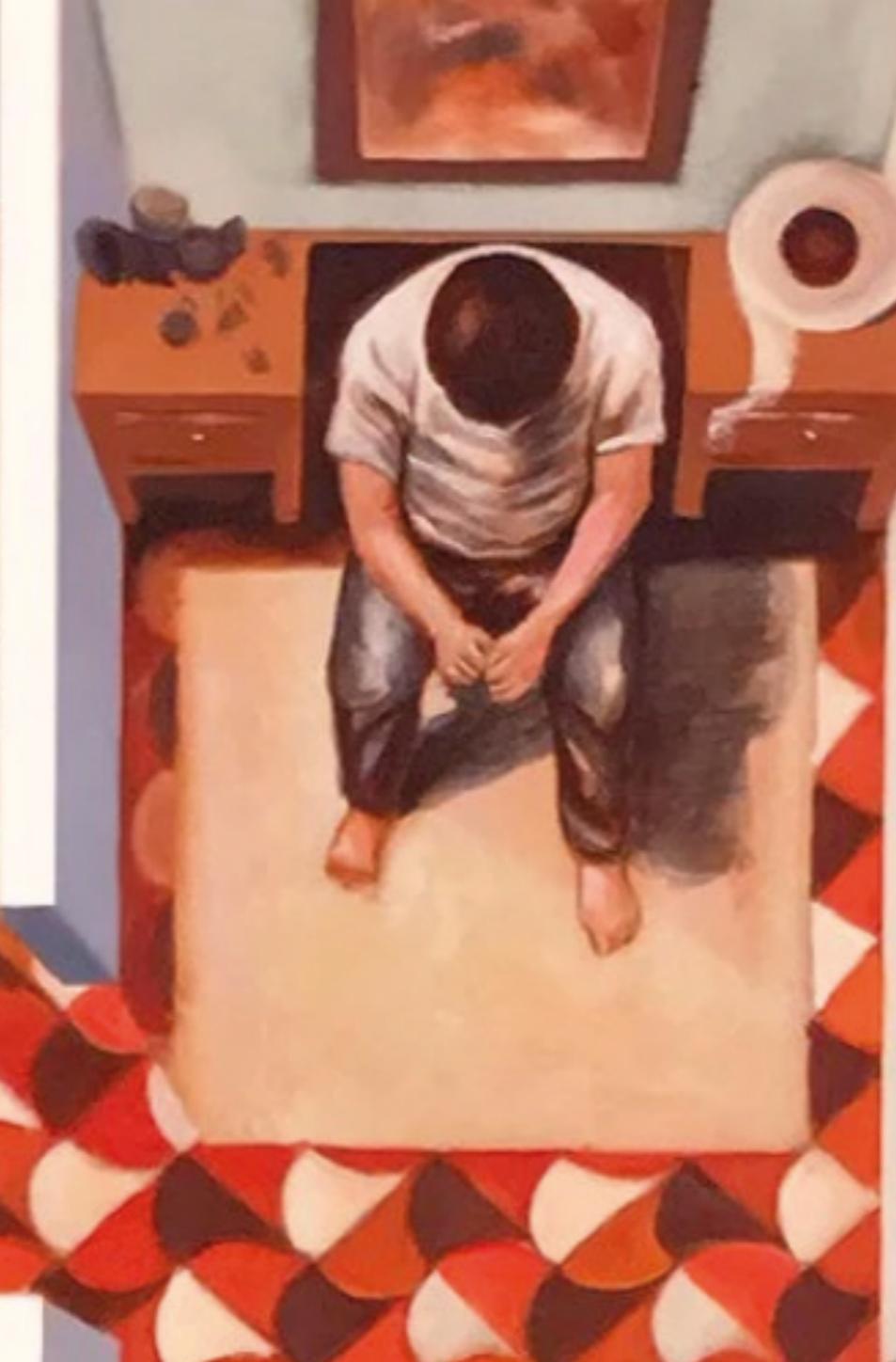
The painting's imagined suitcase of money becomes a hallucination, a symbol of projection and fear. The gallerist, rather than counting cash, lies awake, absorbed in private worries. It is a self-portrait by proxy, a meditation on complicity and fatigue within an art world that cannot escape its own economy.



Y

Justin Loke
*At Home with a Potato after receiving Feedback
about his Artwork*, 2024
oil and acrylic on canvas
80 x 80 cm





YU

Justin Loke
*An Artist Contemplating a Rash Act, the Cleaner
Enters the Room Thinking it is Empty*, 2024
oil and acrylic on canvas
80 x 80 cm



Y

An Artist Contemplating a Rash Act, the Cleaner Enters the Room Thinking It is Empty plays on the enduring stereotype of the artist as a fragile, suffering being. The scene unfolds quietly: a cleaner enters, believing the room to be empty, while the artist contemplates a rash act.

The Romantic image of the tormented artist, once a mark of authenticity, has become a marketable persona, a brand of emotional capital dressed in melancholy. The cleaner, absorbed in her routine, remains invisible to this spectacle of self-conscious despair. Her indifference is neither cruel nor careless, but an unconscious refusal to participate in another's performance of suffering.

The painting turns this encounter into an allegory of perception and class, of who is seen and who is unseen. It is also a reflection on the everyday moment in which we all, at some point, enter a room thinking it is empty, only to realise it was never empty at all.



Y

Justin Loke

An Art Collector Sleeping in his Hotel Room, 2024

oil and acrylic on canvas

80 x 80 cm





Y



Justin Loke
*A Comedy that Nobody Laughs at
is Performance Art I*, 2024
oil and acrylic on canvas
80 x 80 cm

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This painting revisits the image of the Joker, lying in bed, drawn from the film starring Joaquin Phoenix. The work reflects on empathy for the failed comedian and the uneasy overlap between comedy, tragedy, and art. The title borrows from the British drama Baby Reindeer, where the line "A comedy that nobody laughs at is performance art" captures the ambiguity between performance and breakdown, success and failure.

Here, the bed becomes a stage of inoperativity, a state between potential and action. The figure's stillness recalls Giorgio Agamben's idea that true potential lies not in what is done, but in the capacity to withhold doing. It is a portrait of exhaustion and resistance, of those who remain suspended between wanting to act and choosing not to. The painting turns idleness into a quiet philosophy of habit, madness, and survival.



YU

Justin Loke
*A Curator giving the Misogynist Artist
a Lesson on Equality*, 2024
oil and acrylic on canvas
80 x 80 cm





W

Justin Loke
Bowling, 2016
ink on paper
67 x 34 cm (drawing), 46.5 x 120 cm (scroll)



W

Justin Loke
Buying Lottery, 2016
ink on paper
67 x 34 cm (drawing), 46.5 x 120 cm (scroll)



W

Justin Loke
Smoking, 2016
ink on paper
67 x 34 cm (drawing), 46.5 x 120 cm (scroll)



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