

# *Bourgeois Spoon* Jonathan Kopinski

August 25 - September 12, 2021

## (who doesn't want to taste the Bourgeois spoon?)

When Jonathan Kopinski first asked me to write this essay for his latest exhibition at Jan Manton Gallery, he gave me a lengthy document detailing each work on show. In response to a particular work depicting the sketched outline of a pointed turret, scooped up by an enormous ladle, he mused, "A spoonful of property. ... (who doesn't want to taste the Bourgeois spoon?)." His comment, wryly clever and complete with a charming visual metaphor, says much about the rest of this exhibition (which was aptly named *Bourgeois Spoon* after this artwork).

Architecture, world politics, economics, the human body and Renaissance art – Kopinski's interests stretch far and wide. In *Bourgeois Spoon*, these themes and references are heavily peppered across a series of works painted on canvas boards, arranged by the artist into various polyptychs. Muted colours and simplified compositions dominate, painted alternately with thick, steady layers of paint and explosive streaks of dry colour. Found photographic images insert themselves periodically to create light collages.

Immediately apparent throughout this exhibition is its prolific references to disparate historical narratives, media images and personal recollections. Restricted by their small-scale, standardised canvases, each work casts a magnified focus onto their subjects, limiting the viewer to experiencing only fragments of memories, tales or events. The result is a series of works which deny clear readings, thus maintaining a sense of enigma which is both frustrating and deeply intriguing.

Several works across the exhibition make distinct art historical references; Kopinski's Polke as *Microorganism (Polke als Mikroorganismus)*, for example, constitutes an emotive inversion of the German artist *Sigmar Polke's (1941-2010) Polke as Astronaut (Polke Als Astronaut)* (1968). In addition, several panels in the hexptych *T is for tempesta* form manipulated copies of works by the renowned Venetian Renaissance painter Giorgione (d. 1510), who was known for his enigmatic and poetic paintings which evade traditional visual narratives.

Other notable references include Goethe's (1749-1832) famous play *Faust*, which tells the story of a discontent, wealthy man who relinquishes his soul to the Devil in exchange for unlimited knowledge and worldly pleasures; the Crystal Palace, an enormous glass-plated building constructed in London in 1851 to celebrate Britain's imperial and industrial ambitions, mysteriously burnt down in 1936; and Dido's Cave, an eighteenth-century grotto which in itself refers to the famous scene in Virgil's *Aeneid* whereby the two protagonists are romantically united.

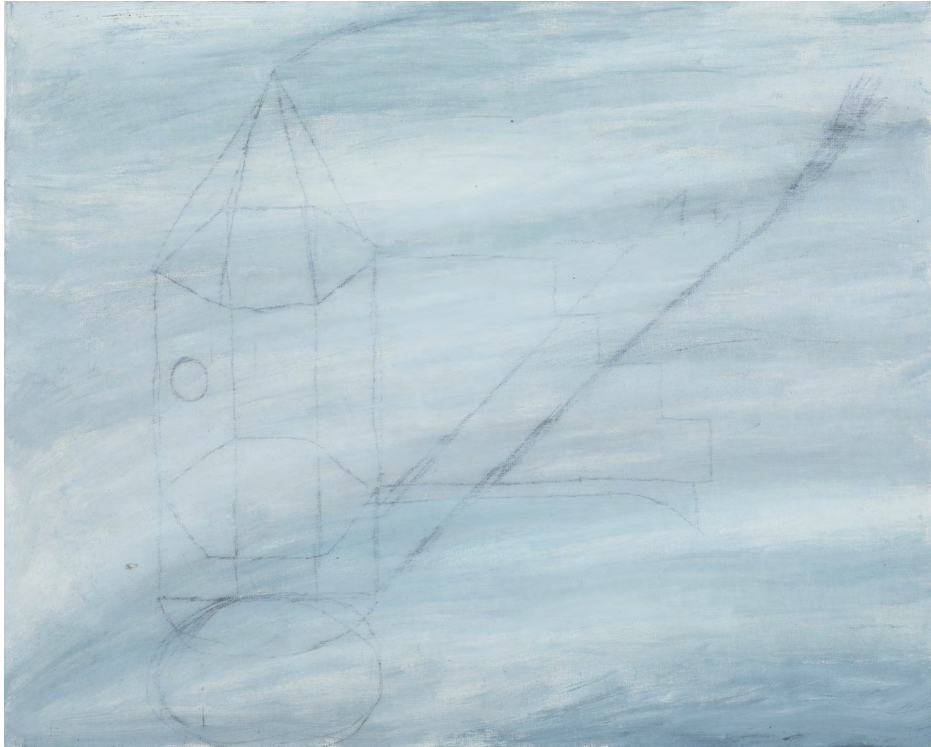
Plucked from various times and spaces in history, these images and narratives form disjointed connections with one another across Kopinski's works. In many ways, this onslaught of random imagery reflects our rampant culture of hyper-consumption. News stories, popular media and imaginations bleed into one another, floating in a miasma of constant catastrophes and the unending generation of events. All news becomes old news – what was once current has passed, and will inevitably occur again. Kopinski himself has likened one of his works to, "The banal yet absurd condition in which we all find ourselves in – consuming the violent present which soon becomes a (continuous) violent past."

This constant state of over-exposure to content brings to mind conversations about the boundaries between private and public (domestic and corporate) spaces in cities. Several of Kopinski's works reveal warm, intimate spaces opening out onto vast cityscapes, dominated by towering skyscrapers. Against these steel blue and grey vistas, the soft pink bedspreads and curtains, glimpsed as if through small windows, appear almost swallowed up by the harsh inflexibility of their surroundings. Also present are periodic shocks of bright red, painted sometimes in large swaths of paint or splattered across compositions violently, as blood spurts from a severed artery. Against the cold, inhospitable silhouettes of Kopinski's cities, the presence of these warm colours intimate a distinct, pulsing bodiliness which appear almost to wrestle with these spaces of perpetual urbanity.

This tension is again clearly alluded to in Kopinski's work *The body politic: Metabolic system*. Against a washed white background stands a dissected human figure, reminiscent of early Renaissance depictions of cadavers. This work offers a clear visual metaphor for the political term 'body politic', which conceptualises a city or state according to the systems and structures of the human body. Here our most private parts of ourselves – our bodies – are conflated with public and corporate spaces. With both this work and others, Kopinski seems to ask; where does the individual end, and the city begin? Who are we as citizens of the world?

These questions, asked by him across his works, are met with no answer. In many ways, this reminds me of Giorgione's works, which so famously eluded the accepted narrative formulas of its time to create inexplicable, yet impossibly alluring works. Kopinski does the same here; his refusal towards direct interpretation of his works creates such poetry and enigma that we feel compelled to return to these confounding works, again and again.

—Zali Matthews



*Bourgeois spoon*

2020

Oil and pencil on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8cm

\$550



*Balaclava (or a corporate office worker watches a 50 second world news clip  
of violent state actors in Eastern Europe before starting work)*

2020

Oil on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8cm

\$550



*T is for tempesta*

2021

Oil, pencil and collage on canvas boards mounted on timber panel, 20.4 x  
177.8 cm (Hexptych)

\$2200



*Artist as Dido's cave (with the world)*

2021

Acrylic and oil on canvas boards mounted on timber panels, 40.6 x 101.6 cm  
(Diptych)

\$990



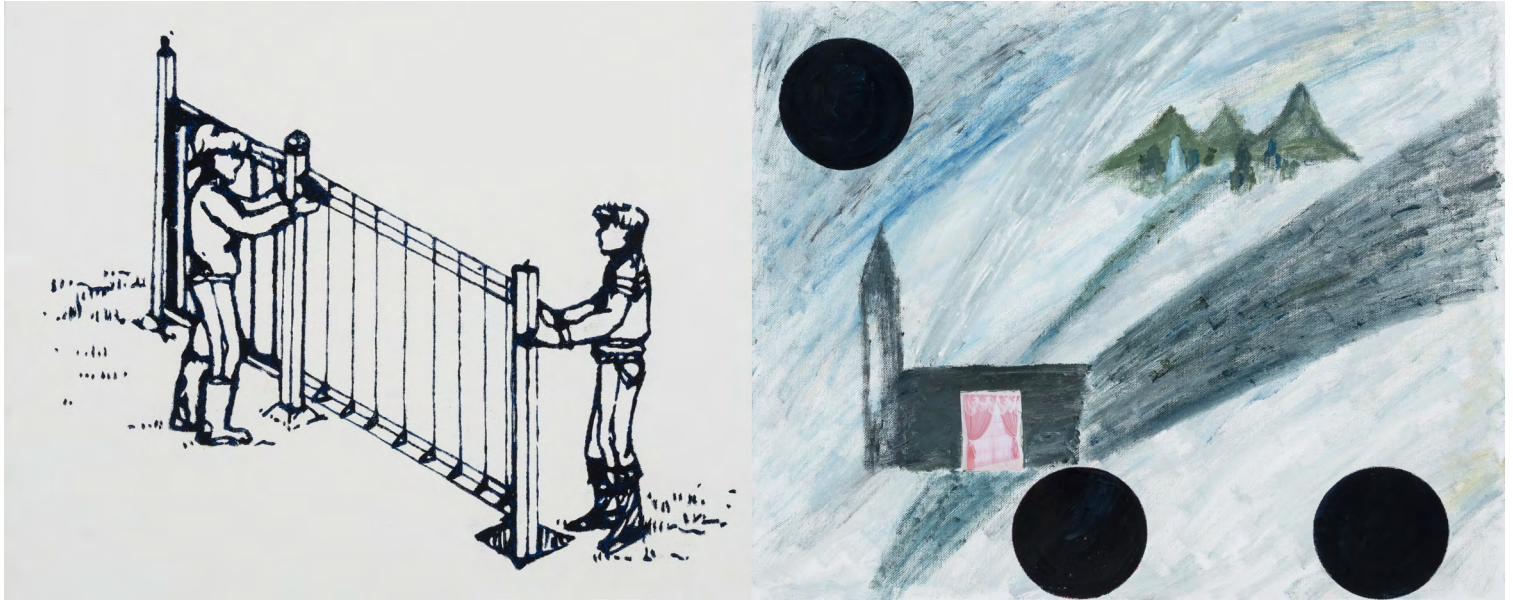
*I am a poetic Renaissance artist. I am a mock orange hedge*

2021

Oil and collage on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550





*Faustian pact:  
The construction of a fence  
&*

*Faust's study (restless, high-vaulted, narrow, gothic chamber)*

2021

Oil, acrylic and collage on canvas boards mounted on timber panels, 40.6 x 101.6cm (Diptych)

\$990

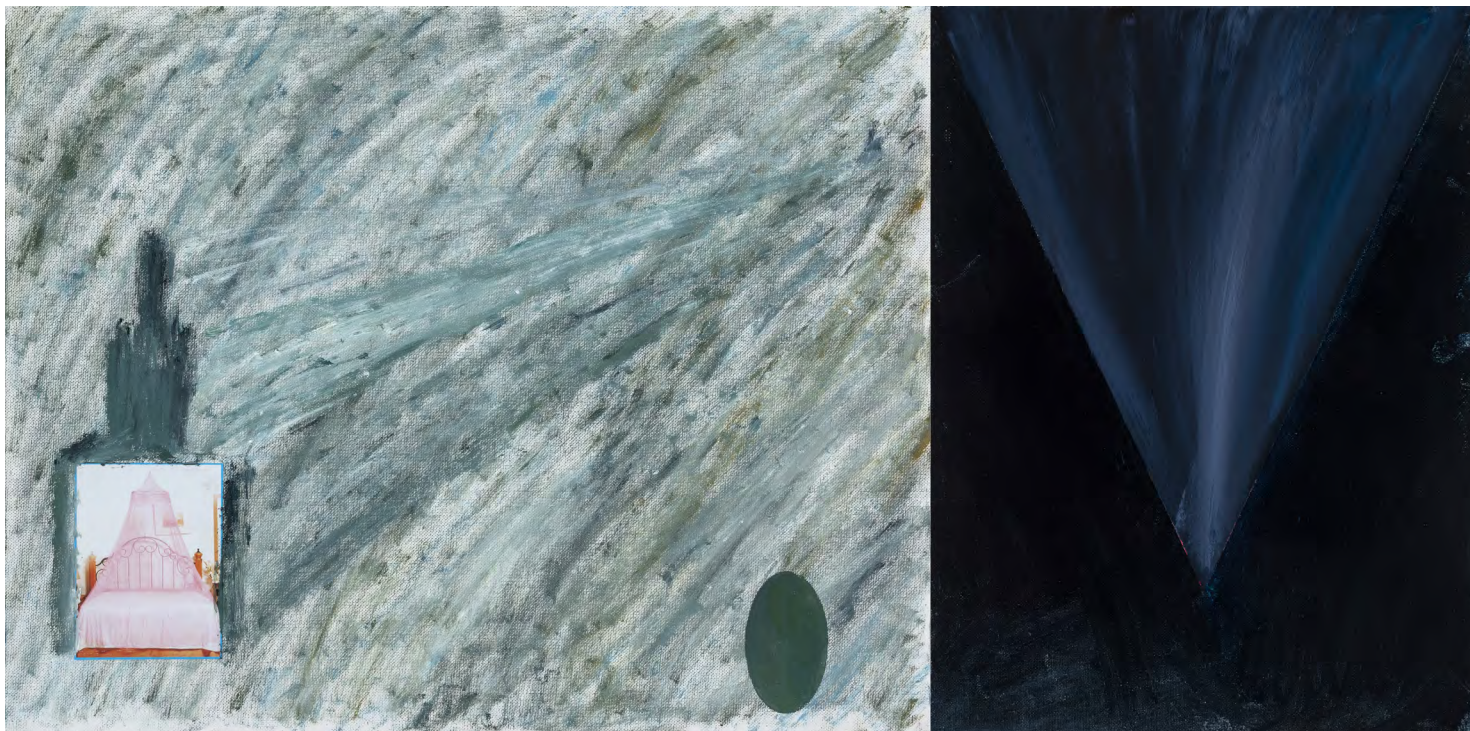


*Man spitting*

2021

Oil and PVA glue on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550



*What now?*

2021

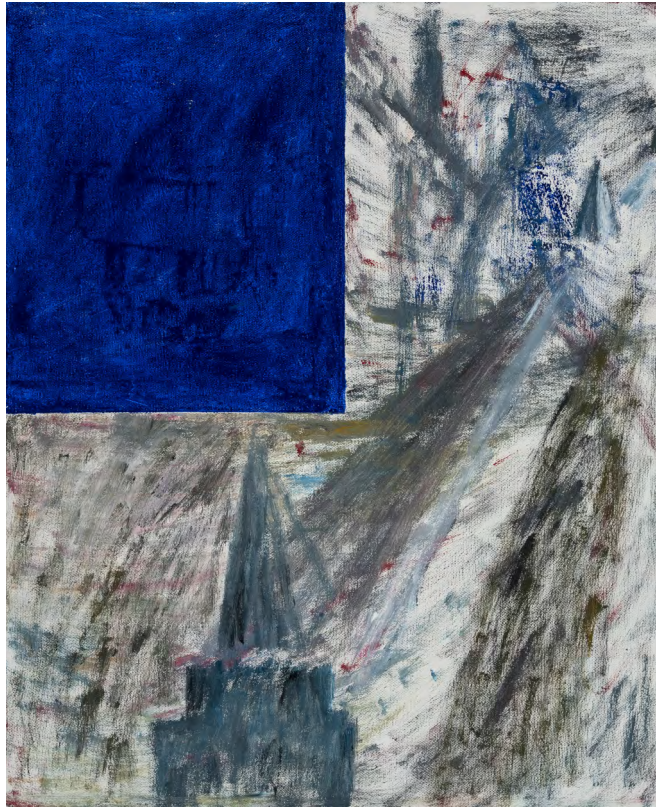
Oil and collage on canvas boards mounted on timber panels, 40.6 x 81.3cm  
(Diptych)

\$890



*Flower / free trade agreement*  
2020  
Oil on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550



*Blue monochrome with militarised border wall*

2021

Oil and acrylic on canvas, 60 x 50 cm

\$650



*It's nothing:  
Economic miracle  
&  
Nothing painting  
&  
Economic despair  
2021*

Oil on canvas boards mounted on timber panels, 40.6 x 152.4 cm (Triptych)

\$1500



*Family wealth (Brisbane socialite)*

2021

Oil and collage on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550



*Polke as Microorganism (Polke als Mikroorganismus)*

2020

Oil and PVA size on polyester, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550





*Labourage profond*

2021

Oil, acrylic pencil, acrylic varnish and collage on canvas boards mounted on  
timber panels, 40.6 x 152.4 cm (Triptych)

\$1500



*Emilia schläft auf einem feld*

2020

Oil on canvas board mounted on timber panels, 40.6 x 50.8cm

\$550



*Ok:  
Świat  
&*

*Danube school / American high-rise*

*2020*

*Oil and pencil case lettering on canvas boards mounted on timber panels,  
40.6 x 101.6 cm (Diptych)*

*\$990*

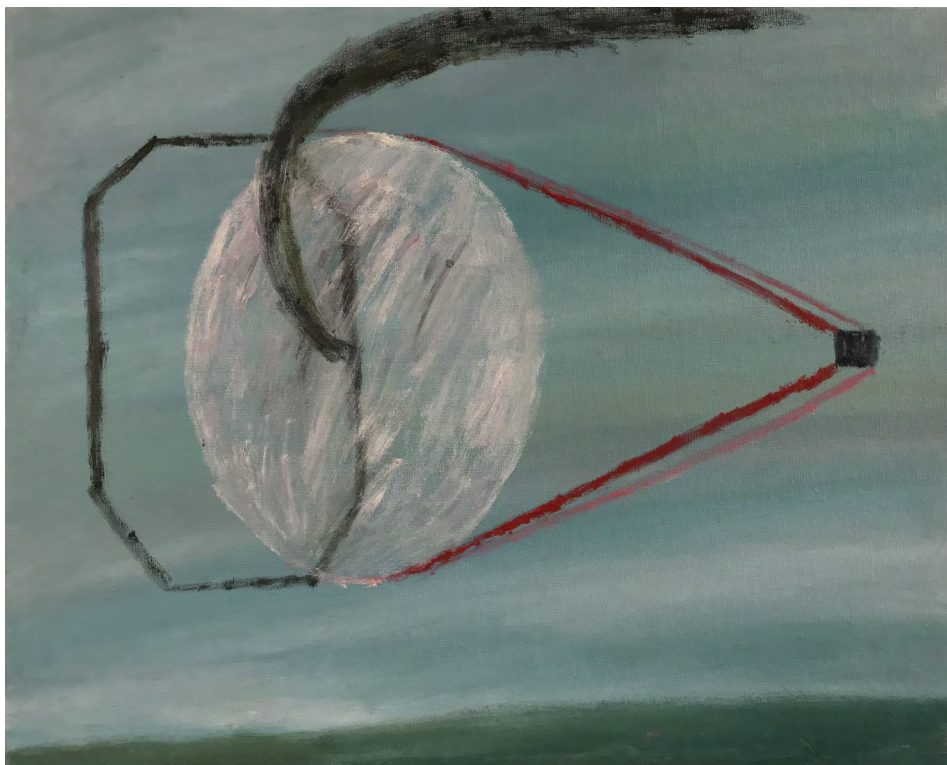


*Well-dressed French Marxist*

2020

Oil on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550



*der Lautsprecher*

2020

Oil on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550



*Worldview*

2020

Oil on canvas board on mounted timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550



*Worker (Gateway to new markets)*

2020

oil on collage on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550



*Inner emigration*

2020

Oil on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550





*Worry*  
2020

Oil and stickers on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550



*Negative particle:  
Corporate door  
&  
To you  
2020*

Oil and collage on canvas boards mounted on timber panels, 40.6 x 101.6 cm  
(Diptych)

\$990

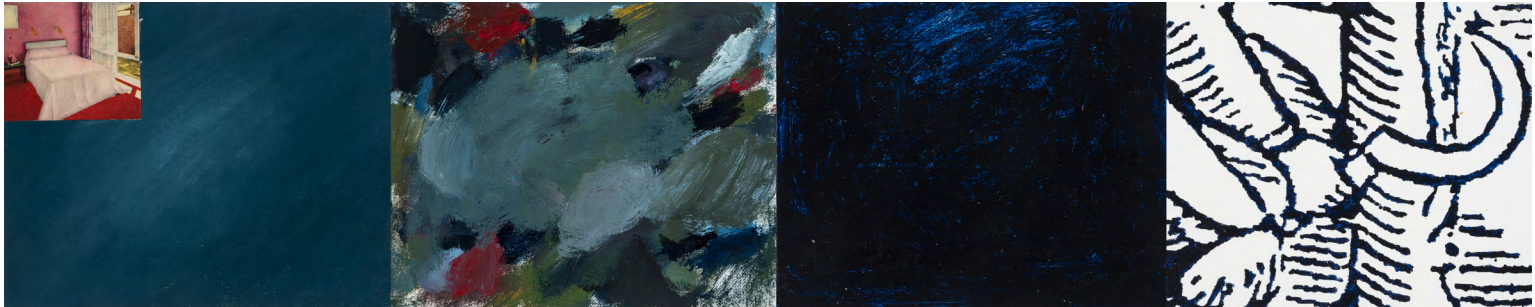


*Divided street*

2020

Oil on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550

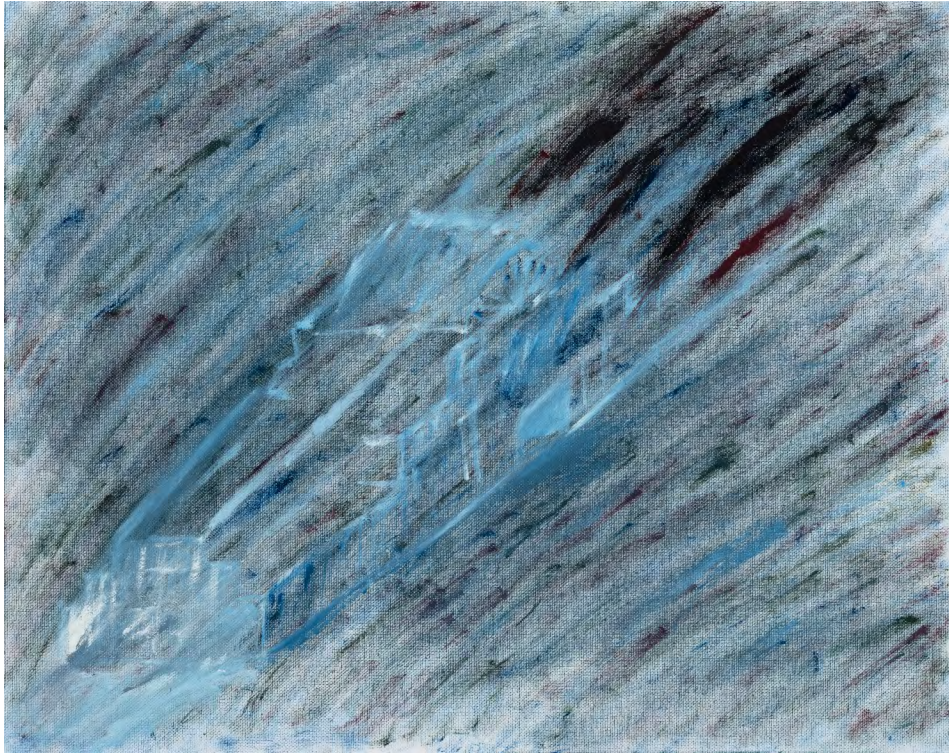


*Real estate or something else?*

2021

Oil, acrylic and collage on canvas boards mounted on timber panels, 20.4 x  
101.6 cm (Tetraptych)

\$990

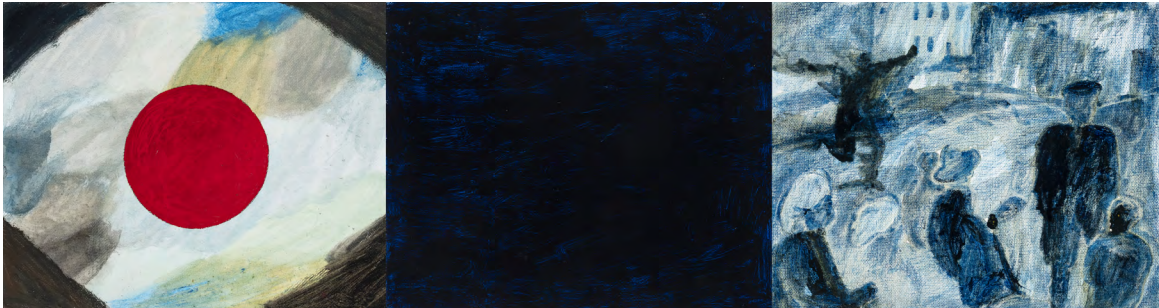


*The Crystal Palace on fire*

2020

Oil on canvas board mounted on timber panel, 40.6 x 50.8 cm

\$550

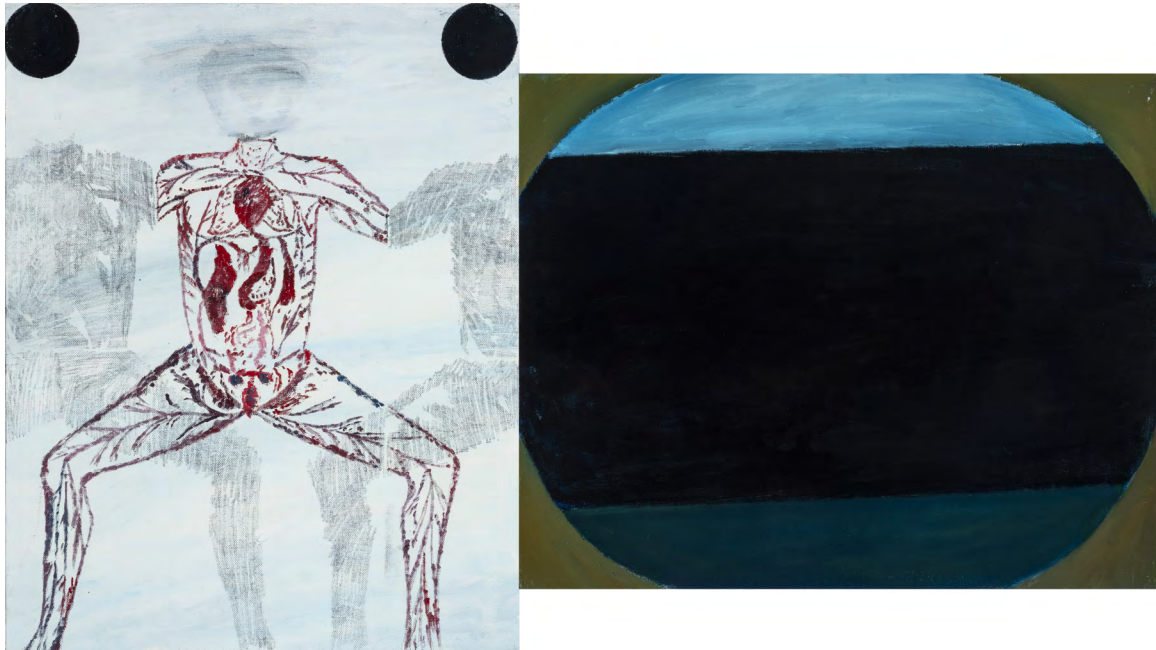


*What you did*

2021

Oil on canvas boards mounted on timber panels, 20.4 x 76.2 cm (Triptych)

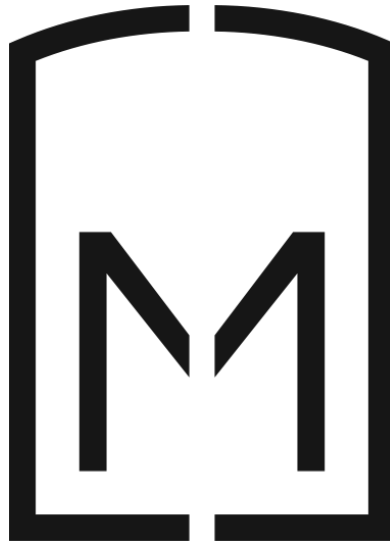
\$790



*The body politic:  
Metabolic system  
&  
Neo-liberal consensus*  
2020

Oil and pencil on canvas boards mounted on timber panels, 50.8 x 91.4 cm (Diptych)

\$990



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