

Karsten Schubert London

Press Release

Paul Barlow: Superfluids

15 September–15 October 2022

Room 2, Soho, London

Open Tuesday–Friday, 11am–6pm; Saturday 11am–5pm

Walking along the River Thames to Paul Barlow's studio in Woolwich, I found peculiar parallels between the deep ridges in the mud along the riverbank, and the blooming halos of the artist's paintings. Yet while Barlow's paintings are reminiscent of forms in nature, they are infused with aspects of a world beyond the naked eye.

A self-proclaimed 'mudlark' of strange forms, the abstract shapes that Barlow invents are the result of an exacting process. By adding and subtracting paint from the canvas using a water-soaked brush, Barlow allows the liquid to disperse across the pigmented surface so that thread-like ravines move outwards from the broader strokes he makes. Sometimes the result is an electrifying, charged image; sometimes it is but a soft glow.

To make these paintings, Barlow layers thin washes of diluted acrylic paint, creating veils of colour that are then disrupted by the brush. As the water shifts within the weave of the canvas, the images arise autonomously. When Barlow leaves the studio at night, there is no guarantee of what he will find the next day.

A remarkable aspect of Barlow's practice is that the more methodical he is with his process, the more expansive it becomes. The repetitions of form and technique enable him to guide the paint into its own liberation. While the artist's own gesture is important in this process—including the act of moving his body around the canvas, which is placed upon a set of trestles—Barlow emphasises that it is not about the performative element of moving water and paint across the canvas; it is about the image.



Paul Barlow, *OOO*, 2022

References to nature radiate from Barlow's paintings and his inquisitive mind is revealed when he discusses the different phenomena he has spent time researching. Most recently it is superfluidity, a phenomenon in physics whereby a fluid flows with constant kinetic energy through the absence of its viscosity, which can be observed in specific forms of helium at very low temperatures.

When asked where his paintings might go next, Barlow rejects any certainty. He projects the sense that something is compelling him to chase these shapes, moving towards expansion but also to a level of absurdity. 'Really my process is putting paint on the canvas and taking it off again', he laughs. And while this may be true, it is a statement that reflects the magic of Barlow's practice, and painting more broadly.

About the artist

Paul Barlow (b. 1988, Sheffield, UK) lives and works in London and received his post graduate Diploma from the Royal Academy Schools, London in 2021. He was recently artist in residence at the Joseph and Anni Albers Foundation, Connecticut in 2019. Recent group exhibitions include *New Beginnings* (Blindspot Gallery, Hong Kong, 2022); *Tomorrow* (White Cube, 2021); *Bloomberg New Contemporaries* (South London Gallery, 2021); *21 Days Lacuna* (Slugtown & Arcade Gallery, London, 2021); *Show Off (Open Rehearsal)* (Cooke Latham Gallery, London, 2020) and *Standstill* (Kubik Gallery, Porto, 2019). Recent solo exhibitions include *00:00:00*, South Parade, London and the RA Schools Degree Show, Royal Academy of Arts, London, 2021.

About Karsten Schubert London

Karsten Schubert London is a contemporary art gallery in Soho, London, representing a list of prominent and emerging British artists: Rose English, Kirsten Glass, Tess Jaray, Sarah Kogan, Cathie Pilkington, Frances Richardson and Alison Wilding. Since its founding in 1986 the gallery has presented a continuous exhibition programme in London's Soho, today operating at 46 and 44 Lexington Street. The gallery works to nurture the careers of its artists through commercial exhibitions, fostering institutional shows and purchases, commissions and publications by its publishing arm, Ridinghouse.

Press Enquiries

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