

Victoria Miro

The Stories We Tell: *Tidawhitney Lek, Emil Sands, Khalif Tahir Thompson*

Exhibition: 14 November 2025–17 January 2026

16 Wharf Road, London N1 7RW



Victoria Miro is delighted to present the first significant introduction of three emerging artists, all born in the 1990s, to a London audience.

The Stories We Tell offers a vivid exploration of memory, identity and family through the distinctive lenses of Tidawhitney Lek, Emil Sands, and Khalif Tahir Thompson. Each artist blends autobiographical elements with imagined and historical narratives, uniting their individual stories through a focus on the human figure.

Tidawhitney Lek, a Cambodian-American artist based in Southern California, draws inspiration from her experience growing up as a first-generation American born to immigrant parents. Lek's paintings are acts of remembering, documenting scenes of everyday life within a large Asian family. She paints with a sharp eye for detail, conjuring images that explore issues of home and belonging. **Emil Sands**, a London-born painter and writer currently living in New York, captures the physical idiosyncrasies of the human body in his large-scale canvases. His semi-nude figures, often viewed from behind, roam in expansive landscapes and open beach settings. In his tender portrayal of flesh, Sands explores the complex relationship between viewer and subject – between seeing and being seen. **Khalif Tahir Thompson**, born and based in Brooklyn, invites viewers into the everyday lives of his sitters through large, vibrant canvases. Describing his work as portraiture, many of Thompson's paintings are inspired by family photograph albums. Thompson constructs compositions using this familial cast of characters, layering contemporary and cultural references that encourage us to consider notions of race, home, belonging and – crucially – how identity is shared.

Left to right: **Tidawhitney Lek**, *Around the Corner* (detail), 2025. Acrylic and oil on canvas. 182.88 x 121.92 cm, 72 x 48 in © Tidawhitney Lek. Courtesy the artist.

Emil Sands, *Ripley's Ladder* (detail), 2025. Oil on linen. 190.5 x 139.7 cm, 75 x 55 in © Emil Sands. Courtesy the artist.

Khalif Tahir Thompson, *Pink Clouds* (detail), 2025. Oil, acrylic, handmade papers, papyrus on canvas. 194 x 194 cm, 76 3/8 x 76 3/8 in © Khalif Tahir Thompson. Courtesy the artist and Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery.

The exhibition is accompanied by three new texts by Aleesa Pitchamarn Alexander, Christopher Riopelle, and Debbie Meniru.

‘In memorializing the mundane, Lek offers visual gestures of recognition to her family and community elders. *This is not your motherland, but it is mine. And I will translate this place for you; I will make it ours.*’ – **Aleesa Pitchamarn**

Alexander, the Robert M. and Ruth L. Halperin Associate Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art and Co-Director of the Asian American Art Initiative at the Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University, CA

‘Time is rendered inconsequential here, sequence inadequate, in favour of a far richer engagement with a specific persona. As Sands, like Seurat, knows, our relationships especially with those closest to us evolve, mutate, flow.’

– **Christopher Riopelle**, the Neil Westreich Curator of Post-1800 Paintings at the National Gallery, London

‘Although rooted in the past, his paintings constantly pull us back to the present moment. It is this push and pull that creates the nostalgia which permeates much of Thompson’s work.’ – **Debbie Meniru**, an independent writer, editor and curator and previously the Assistant Curator of Research & Interpretation at Tate, London

Tidawhitney Lek (born 1992) completed her BFA at California State University, Long Beach in 2017. Solo exhibitions include Long Beach Museum of Art, California; Sow & Tailor, Los Angeles; and Taymour Grahne Projects, London. Her work has been included in group exhibitions at Museum of Contemporary Art San Diego; Cantor Arts Center Stanford University, Stanford; ICA Miami; Anat Ebgi, New York; and Ben Brown Fine Arts, London. Institutional collections include the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Los Angeles County Museum of Art; K11 Art Foundation, Hong Kong; and Pérez Art Museum Miami. Lek previously collaborated with Victoria Miro as part of the Miro Presents programme in March 2025.

Emil Sands (born 1998) completed his Fine Art Foundation at Central Saint Martins, his BA and MPhil in Classics at the University of Cambridge, followed by the Henry Fellowship at Yale School of Art and Yale Creative Writing. Recent solo exhibitions include Kasmin Gallery, New York; JO-HS, Mexico City; and Tibor de Nagy Gallery, New York. Sands will publish his memoir *I Am Not Achilles* with Scribner (US) and Picador (UK) in 2026, following the publication of a personal essay about growing up with cerebral palsy in *The Atlantic* in 2023.

Khalif Tahir Thompson (born 1995) completed his BFA at Purchase College, New York and MFA in Painting / Printmaking at Yale School of Art. Recent solo exhibitions include the Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts + Culture, North Carolina and Zidoun-Bossuyt Gallery, Luxembourg, Paris and Dubai. Thompson was selected for Kehinde Wiley’s Black Rock Senegal residency, Senegal; the Yaddo Artist Residency, Saratoga Springs, New York; and AAF/Seebacher Fine Arts Prize, Salzburg, Austria. Collections include Saint Louis Art Museum, Missouri; Pérez Art Museum Miami; Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, Kansas City; Museum of Fine Arts, Houston; and Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, Washington D.C.

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