

# Merlin James

## Long Game

23 January - 13 March 2016

---

Continuity and duration are active elements in Merlin James' process. In the studio he reworks paintings over long periods, making it hard to pin them down to one year or one stage of his career. In his exhibitions, newer paintings echo, develop or diverge from earlier ones in strikingly diverse body of work.

As well as a painter James is known for his critical writing on art, and the temporal reach of his own painting encompasses genres and antitypes from across art history. His often intensively worked canvases offer a wide variety of imagery including empty interiors, rural landscapes, architecture and scenes of sexual intimacy. His modes range from kinds of abstraction to apparent realism, via various types and degrees of stylisation and artifice.

James' concern with the history of his medium is not, however, a conceptually detached one. Theme, mood and meaning are sought and developed in each work. Material qualities and the problems of painting-as-object also remain paramount. As part of this James often constructs highly individual integral picture frames for his works. In recent years he has also begun to incorporate objects into the paintings themselves – often small model buildings made with offcuts from the framing process. Some of these studio 'by-products' (as the artist refers to them) are included in Long Game.

James lives and works in Glasgow. Recent solo exhibitions have included shows at the Kunstverein Freiburg (2014); Parasol Unit, London; KW Institute for Contemporary Art, Berlin (2013); Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin (2012, 2015); New York Studio School (2007); Kettle's Yard, Cambridge (1996) and National Gallery, Wales (1995). In 2007 James represented Wales at the 52nd Venice Biennale. Recent group exhibitions include CCA, Derry (2015); Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow; Museo Pecci, Prato, Italy (2013); Royal Hibernian Academy, Dublin (2012); Brooklyn Museum (2008). He has been a guest lecturer at many universities in Britain and the USA and in 1996 gave the Kingston University Stanley Picker Lecture at the Tate Gallery entitled The Non-Existence of Art Criticism. In 2002, he was the first holder of the Alex Katz Chair in Painting at The Cooper Union, New York, delivering the keynote lecture Painting Per Se. In 2010, James received a Scottish Arts Council Visual Artists' Award.