

NINO MIER GALLERY

NEW YORK | BRUSSELS

Jonathan Wateridge

Works On Paper

New York | Tribeca

September 5 – October 18, 2025

In *Works on Paper*, Jonathan Wateridge shows a series of work that he has been making since the latter part of 2024, works that vibrate with an atmospheric and psychological tension. The ghostly, translucent characters that populate his works seem to dissolve into their elegant interiors and outdoor settings. While his earlier practice was rooted in a robustly realistic approach, in recent years Wateridge has focused on carving out his visual language from elements of the cinematic and the real, combined with the grammars of modernism. The cinematic scene-building is indeed overwhelmingly present in this new series of works, functioning as a backdrop for expressive, haunted faces. This shift prioritizes emotional resonance over narrative clarity, recalling the artist's ongoing interest in fragility, isolation, and unease.

A defining continuity with his earlier work is the sophisticated interplay between realism and fiction. Wateridge's compositions are narrative-driven yet resist direct interpretation, cultivating an atmosphere of quiet anxiety. He continues to engage with Bertolt Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, creating emotional and intellectual distance between viewer and subject. Still, the illusion of detachment is repeatedly broken by the fearful expressions of his figures, who stare outward toward an unseen threat beyond the frame. Their darkened eyes suggest horror or blank detachment, making the viewer complicit in the tension. These figures, at once absorbed in their environments and isolated from them, seem to question how we construct and perceive reality.

Increasingly, Wateridge trades the expansive outdoor scenes of his earlier work for interior settings inspired by mid-century L.A. modernism. These spaces recall the luminous domestic architecture of Pierre Koenig and Craig Ellwood, and their quiet, composed solitude nods to the emotional resonance of Edward Hopper. At the same time, the staged, calculated compositions evoke Jeff Wall's constructed photography. Within these refined domestic environments, an undefined tension simmers beneath the surface. The affluent surroundings serve not as havens but as psychological zones where something elusive and threatening might be just out of sight.

His figures are painted with loose, gestural strokes that contrast with the detailed precision of their settings, placing them in a state of visual and emotional flux. These bodies appear abstracted, their forms minimized and often rendered in distorted, unnatural colors that contribute to the uncanny, dreamlike atmosphere. Sometimes glowing in artificial light, sometimes fading into a smoky haze, the figures seem to flicker in and out of focus. Limbs may be cropped, disjointed, or highlighted in moments of implied movement. Bodies are flattened by their environments yet remain sculpturally present in the pictorial space, heightening the ambiguity between presence and absence, solidity and dissolution.

Color plays a crucial role in shaping the emotional tone. Muted greens, greys, and blues dominate the palette, occasionally interrupted by bursts of fresh, bright hues and artificial skin tones. These chromatic choices recall the photographic process of solarization, where light and dark tones invert to produce ghostly, hollowed-out forms. The absence of natural flesh tones reinforces a sense of disembodiment and emotional distance, enhancing the spectral quality of Wateridge's figures.

Throughout the series, themes of isolation and uncertainty persist. Each work features a solitary figure; there is no dialogue or interaction, yet the suggestion of a second presence lurking just outside the frame is ever-present. The viewer is left in the dark as to why. In this ambiguity, Wateridge continues to pair the formal clarity of high-modernist aesthetics with cinematic narrative suggestion. He juxtaposes familiarity and strangeness, rendering translucent, atomized beings who are both absorbed by and interrupted within their affluent surroundings. The result is a world in which existential solitude quietly settles into every surface.

NINO MIER GALLERY

NEW YORK | BRUSSELS

The paintings on paper in this exhibition are a crucial part of Jonathan Wateridge's practice. These works, which stand as paintings in their own right, reveal the artist's meticulous hand and his ability to transform a simple posture into a rich narrative of beauty, information, and story, even at an intimate scale. Works on paper have long been a passion of the gallery and are an integral part of an artist's practice that we celebrate. They offer an intimate, honest, and spontaneous glimpse into the artist's world, inviting the viewer to engage closely and form a direct, personal connection with the work. In their quiet precision and immediacy, they remind us that the smallest surface can hold the largest stories.

Jonathan Wateridge (b. 1972, Lusaka, ZM; lives and works in Norfolk, UK) attended the Glasgow School of Art in 1990. He had recent solo exhibitions with GRIMM, London, UK; T.J. Boulting, London, UK; Galerie Haas, Zurich, CH and Pace / HENI, London, UK. His work was featured in recent group exhibitions with Fresnonian Gallery, London, UK; AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Amsterdam, NL; Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas, TX, US, The Rennie Museum, Vancouver, CA; and the Boghossian Foundation, Brussels, BE. Jonathan Wateridge's work is in multiple public and private collections worldwide, including the Saatchi Collection, UK; Aishti Foundation, LB; Benedict Taschen, DE; Rennie Collection, CA and the Pinault Collection; FR and IT. 'Works On Paper' is the artist's fourth solo presentation with Nino Mier Gallery.