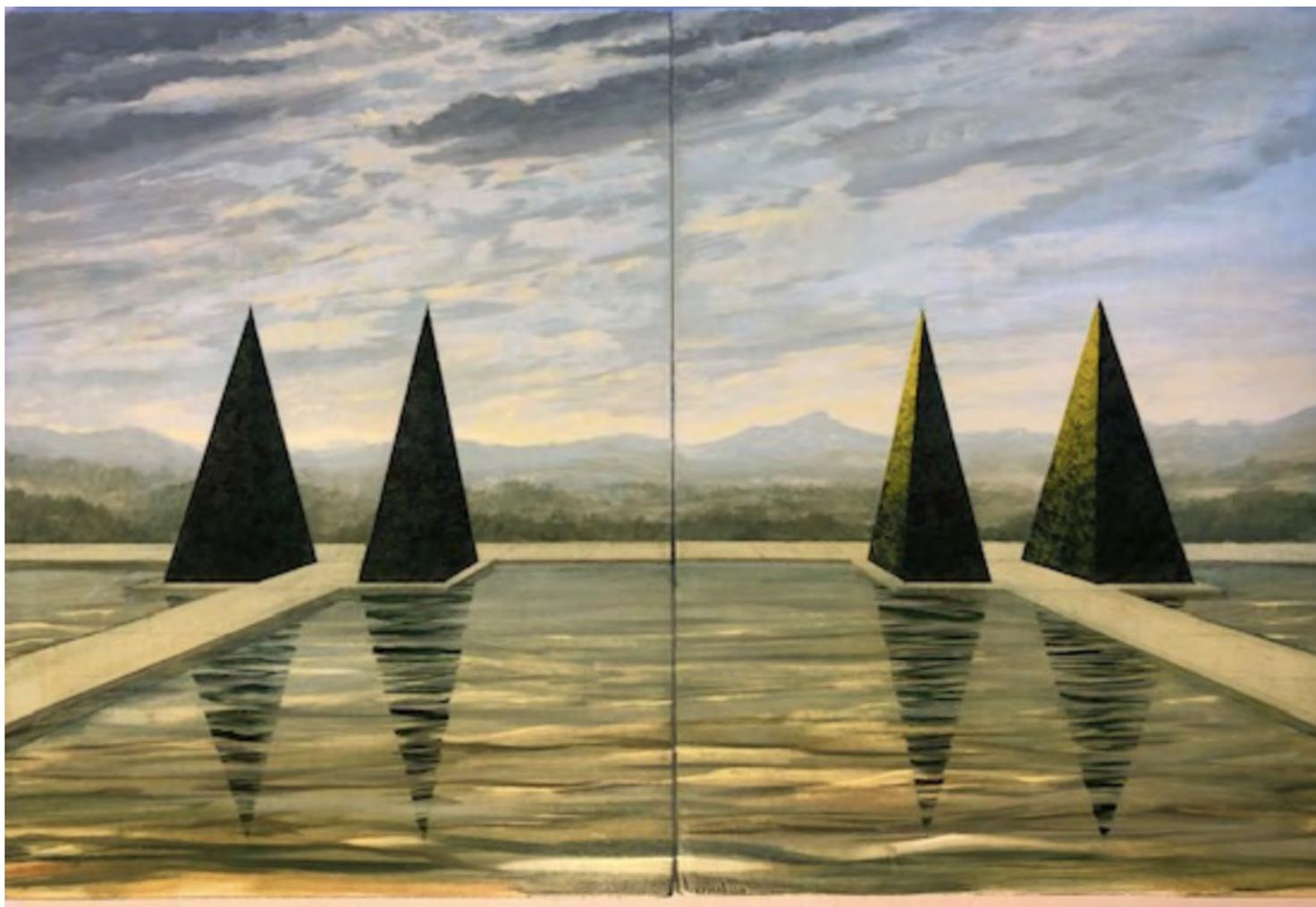


FINDING HOPE IN IMAGINED WORLDS AND ALTERNATIVE FUTURES WITH EMERGING LONDON-BASED ARTISTS SHOLTO BLISSETT AND SALOMÉ WU

By Bella Bonner-Evans • 7 February 2022



Currently, on show at Notting Hill's newest gallery Studio West, *The Reality in Whytch You Create* brings together the work of a new generation of London-based creators who challenge our understandings of what is real and imagine new worlds or alternative futures to repair, rebuild and subvert.

The exhibition includes Sholto Blissett's painstakingly precise paintings of natural, and architectural landscapes and Salomé Wu's soft, organic, and fluid work across sound and video. Superficially their practices are strikingly different, yet they are connected by a common impetus to construct imagined worlds as an escape from our shared reality. Through envisioning surreal yet possible places beyond the known, they both posit questions regarding our relationship with nature, the emphasis on progress within contemporary capitalism and the ways in which we relate to our world or find our place within it.

Sholto Blissett returned to painting after studying Geography at Durham University. Since graduating from the Royal College of Art in 2020 he has exhibited internationally to critical acclaim. His work is distinct, subverting the traditions of landscape painting with fictional gardens full of elegantly pruned topiary and impossibly placed

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cathedrals.

At the heart of his investigation is the relationship between man and nature, both historically and in the present,

“my paintings are a long-term, in-depth look at concepts surrounding our relationship and nature. I question the subject object relationship that is present in the way we understand nature aesthetically in a post-Darwinian world”. Informed by his Geography degree, Blissett is self-reflective and deeply conscious of the western traditions that influence our understandings of ‘nature’ and ‘wilderness’, “Studying geography made me more critical of why I valued certain landscapes over others...understanding the lack of innocence in the way we appreciate nature really informed my practice.”

His paintings are unnervingly unpopulated and toe the line between plausibility and fantasy. His Garden of Hubris series is “a play on the Garden of Eden, and a human dreamland that is slightly dystopian despite trying to be utopian.” He affirms that through his landscapes are perfect, they are



“not really good or utopic places per se. They depict superficially beautiful places that have slightly strange qualities to them because they’re about the ideal of progress and the problems inherit within it.”

Through his subtle critique of notions surrounding ownership and containment of the natural world, alongside an awareness of the issues surrounding the climate crisis that epitomise man’s destruction of nature, Blissett presents us with another kind of world. Beyond that, he holds up a mirror to the ‘hubris’ involved in the notion that we have dominance over the natural world. He triumphantly claims, in the wake of these crisis, that

“We can defiantly use imagination to change the world we are in, that goes without saying.”

Works by Sholto Blissett and Salomé Wu are currently on show at The Reality in Whytch You Create, Studio West in Notting Hill until the 17th of February 2022.