



Wendell Gladstone, *Spooky Action*, 2023. Acrylic on canvas, 80 x 72 in.

Wendell Gladstone

Spooky Action

July 15 – August 19

Opening Reception, Saturday, July 15, 6–8pm

Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles is pleased to announce *Spooky Action*, an exhibition of new paintings by Los Angeles-based artist Wendell Gladstone. This marks the artist's third solo exhibition with the gallery.

Wendell Gladstone's figurative compositions examine the indescribable psychic impact of human relationships. Drawing from elements of Jungian psychology and taking inspiration from quantum physics, the artist engages a variety of visual styles and painting methods to conjure extraordinary scenes free from the governing principles of reality. With a bright, often candy-colored palette layered with transparent mediums that subtly reveal the forms beneath, his paintings lure the viewer in to consider the boundless realm of the human psyche.

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The paintings presented in *Spooky Action* consider the circuitous flow of influences and effects set in motion by intimate relationships. The exhibition title cites “spooky action at a distance,” Einstein’s incredulous quip about entanglement—the phenomenon where distinctly independent subatomic particles are somehow tethered to each other, equally affected by external forces to share an identical state, even when separated by large distances. Expanding upon Gladstone’s interest in figurative painting that is at once human and alien, worldly and otherworldly, structured and fluid, *Spooky Action* articulates the potential for deep connections to open to such inconceivable superpositions.

Throughout the exhibition, interactions among figures activate a synchronous pulse that traverses through and beyond the boundaries of physics, materializing the invisible, potent force of intimacy. As the figures’ interlace fingers, dance, wrap their limbs around each other, and, most often, just barely make contact with the tip of a single finger, the space around them shifts into a mercurial plasticity. Additional limbs inexplicably pop up from entirely different corners of the scene. Contact lingers and evolves into a psychic touch impervious to the limits of time and space.

Gladstone articulates the curious qualities of entanglement and superposition contained within relationships through both the content of the narratives, as well as a systematic material approach. With a palette that ranges between muted and intense hues, the scenes are consistently staged in the shallow space just beyond a stone facade, punctuated by a single window and the leaves and branches of a meandering tree. Gladstone reiterates this quality of compressed depth through a skillful sculptural painting technique, masking and applying extensive layers of acrylic to match the contours of mosaic, concrete, bark, pulp, hair, and fabric—creating bas relief from paint. Echoing the glass surface of window panes and the waxy sheen of leaves, the artist’s use of transparent gel mediums also introduces portals for the viewer to literally see through one layer into the next.

The compacted, plastic depth lends itself to the peculiar narratives occupying the settings in *Spooky Action*. In *Dream Glider*, a figure peering out from a window with dark galactic eyes is somehow everywhere. A perfectly manicured hand plucks a leaf from a branch outside, while the rest of their body hybridizes with the masonry and supports, brick by brick, a second figure sleeping in the tree outside. Rendered with stylistic shifts across the interior, architectural, and exterior planes, the gazing figure maintains the narrative across three distinct dimensions.

While the chimerical *Dream Glider* considers the way a meditative state can create an out-of-body experience, the titular painting of *Spooky Action* hones in on the magnetism and influence of intimacy. A couple rendered in Gladstone’s naturalistic style sits together in a tree, surrounded by warm autumn leaves. Gazing intently at her partner, the touch of the woman’s finger causes the knit of the man’s sleeve to warp out of its pattern. As though their connection has lit a fuse capable of reconfiguring matter, a third, disembodied hand appears grasping the man’s thigh, initiating yet another ripple in the man’s clothing. Visible from the open window behind them, a third figure peaks from behind a curtain, their hands raised as if conducting some kind of magic. Enchantment permeates the scene as each figure gazes in a different direction.

Situated between reality and fantasy, Gladstone’s paintings reside in an ambiguous space where logic and reason fall short. His figures, held in the thrall of embrace, reflect on intimacy and connections as though bewitched by their vitality. Amidst the swirling energy of these relationships, however, *Spooky Action* also makes conspicuous the superimposed force of isolation. Absent the yearning and longing for closeness, the bonds lose their foundation. The initial analyses of quantum entanglement revealed physics’ paradoxical observations of matter, leading physicists to conclude that science has yet to provide a complete description of reality. *Spooky*

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Action posits that the qualities of deep relationships, too, possess an invisible force beyond our wits and comprehension, unveiling a psychological realm as yet impossible to square.

Wendell Gladstone (b. 1972, Boston, MA; Lives and works in Los Angeles, CA) received his BA at Brown University, an MFA in Painting at Claremont Graduate University, and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. He has exhibited in numerous solo exhibitions, including at Shulamit Nazarian, Los Angeles, CA; Kravets/Wehby, New York, NY; and Roberts & Tilton, Los Angeles, CA; and, in 2003, at the San Diego Museum of Contemporary Art. Select museum group exhibitions include the Hammer Museum, Los Angeles, CA; Las Vegas Art Museum, Las Vegas, NV; the Chelsea Art Museum, New York, NY; the Kemper Museum, Kansas City, MO; and the San Antonio Museum of Art, San Antonio, TX. His works have been written about by *Artforum*, *Art in America*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *New York Magazine*, *Artsy*, *Artnet*, *Installation Magazine*, *Elephant*, *Hyperallergic*, *Juxtapoz*, and *WhiteWall*.