

Tanya Leighton

‘ARROW AND PULPIT’

Matthew Krishanu

6 November – 18 December 2021

Matthew Krishanu
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Tanya Leighton, Berlin
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Tanya Leighton is pleased to announce the opening of Matthew Krishanu's 'Arrow and Pulpit', an exhibition of the artist's ongoing exploration of his childhood in South Asia. On view are selections from the artist's 'Another Country' and 'Mission' series, paintings that explore the two realms of Krishanu's memories of Dhaka: that of a boy in the midst of a world of adventure and play and that of a son born to an English priest and a Bengali Indian mother. By using photography as a departure point, Krishanu's art is as much a contemplation of capturing time as it is about religious doctrine. In other words, his work meditates on how the latter conditions the lived experience of the former in a manner that raises questions about Western imperialism's afterlife in South Asia—somehow, embedding both these concerns in the most commonplace of scenes.

Like the photographs one might find stored away in a family album, Krishanu's portraits capture ordinary moments of church life in Bangladesh. Paintings like *Congregation* (2021), *Woman and Chalice* (2019), and *Three Figures (Crucifixion)* (2021) are peculiar not only for the manner in which the artist depersonalises his subjects—in both figure and title—but also the detachment with which he depicts Christianity's rituals. Detachment is, indeed, the most palpable feeling of Krishanu's aesthetic sensibility, which makes great use of thinned oil paint and pared-down compositions to make his subjects feel distant, yet still possessing a sense of interiority. This is the mood that marks all of Krishanu's portraits, inflecting every image with a kind of uneasy withdrawal, an atmosphere that arts critic Ben Luke recently described as a "productive ambiguity."¹

Krishanu's studies thus possess an intimate but distanced relationship to Christianity's machinery. The paintings do not merely record the advancement of Western cosmology into the life world of another culture; rather, they reflect an unwillingness to enter into Christianity's temporal regimen, structured around countless ceremonies and symbols. Detachment in Krishanu's work strikes one as an attempt to hold Western, disciplinary time at a critical remove or, alternatively, to refuse its capture. Therefore, capture seems to be one operative motif in Krishanu's art, one that may shed light on the recurrent figures of two boys that exist almost like two protagonists in his world.

In stark contrast to the incidental character of the mission paintings, the boys in *Archers* (2021), *Riverboat* (2020), and *Boy on a Horse* (2021) are unmistakably grounded, posed in the landscape in scenes of adventure and exploration. Notably, Krishanu does not offer any images of the boys participating in the mission's life; rather, they exist in their own world—alone in the landscape. The exception to this is *Bedroom (Last Supper)* (2021), where the two boys are shown in an interior space, with a copy of Da Vinci's *Last Supper* above their bed, hinting at the overlapping world of the mission and the two boys. In the boys' world, the mission may as well be a subtle but recurring intrusion into their own private, lived experience of time outside the mission's regimen.

In Krishanu's paintings, 'time' takes on manifold metaphoric registers—as divinely boundless, as disciplinary capture, and as imperialism's afterlife. Matthew Krishanu's talent, to be sure, is that he manages to embed all these complex concerns in the most deceptively simple of images, thereby raising questions about how imperialism's afterlife is still impacting the lived experience of South Asia and its diasporas.

¹ Ben Luke, "Painting in Britain: Meet the artists giving a new lease of life to this enduringly popular art form," Evening Standard, September 1, 2021, <https://www.standard.co.uk/culture/exhibitions/painting-in-britain-hayward-gallery-mixing-it-up-b953069.html>.

For further information, please contact:
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The gallery is open Tuesday to Saturday,
11–6pm, and by appointment.

MATTHEW KRISHANU

Matthew Krishanu (born in 1980 in Bradford, England) lives and works in London. He received an MA in Fine Art from Central Saint Martins, London, in 2009.

Recent solo exhibitions include 'Picture Plane', Niru Ratnam Gallery, London (2020); 'House of Crows', Matt's Gallery, London (2019); 'Corvus. A Painting Installation', the Institute of International Visual Arts, London (2019); 'A Murder of Crows', Ikon Gallery, Birmingham (2019) and 'The Sun Never Sets', Midlands Art Centre, Birmingham (2019).

His work has been shown in group exhibitions and international biennials including most recently: 'Mixing It Up: Painting Today' (curated by Ralph Rugoff), Hayward Gallery, London (2021); Coventry Biennial (2021); 'Everyday Heroes', the Hayward Gallery / Southbank Centre, London (2020); 'A Rich Tapestry', Ikon Gallery, UK (curated by Jonathan Watkins), 2nd Lahore Biennale, Pakistan (2020); 'New Figurations: Matthew Krishanu and Sosa Joseph', Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai (2019); 'The John Moores Painting Prize', Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool (2018).

Krishanu's work is held in numerous public collections including the Arts Council Collection, London; Government Art Collection, London; Huddersfield Art Gallery, UK; Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery; Jiangsu Art Museum, Nanjing; Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, New Delhi; and Priseman Seabrook Collection, UK, amongst others.

His work was the recent focus in Studio International, October 2021. An interview with Krishanu and Ben Luke (Review Editor) at The Art Newspaper is forthcoming this November.

Matthew Krishanu
Riverboat, 2020
Detail





Matthew Krishanu
Riverboat, 2020
Oil on canvas
200x270 cm
78¾x106¼ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0001)



Matthew Krishanu
Two Boys on a Log, 2021
Oil on canvas
270x200 cm
106¼x78¾ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0012)



Matthew Krishanu
Two Boys on a Log, 2021
Detail



Matthew Krishanu
Mountain Lake (Boy), 2021
Oil on canvas
150x200 cm
59 $\frac{1}{8}$ x78 $\frac{3}{4}$ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0010)



Matthew Krishanu
Mountain Lake (Boy), 2021
Detail



Matthew Krishanu
Installation View, 'Arrow and Pulpit'
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Matthew Krishanu
Archers, 2021
Oil on canvas
200x140 cm
78¾x55¼ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0006)



Matthew Krishanu
Safari, 2021
Oil on canvas
200x120 cm
78¾x47¼ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0005)





Matthew Krishanu
Boy on a Horse, 2021
Oil on canvas
200x140 cm
78¾x55½ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0004)



Matthew Krishanu
Boy on a Horse, 2021
Detail

Matthew Krishanu
Two Boys with Bows (Tree), 2021
Oil and acrylic on canvas
45x40 cm
17¾x15¾ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0014)



Matthew Krishanu
Boy at Window, 2021
Oil on canvas
40x30 cm
15¾x55⅞ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0002)
Not for Sale





Matthew Krishanu
Bedroom (Last Supper), 2021
Oil on canvas
55x70 cm
21⁵/₈x27¹/₂ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0003)
Not for Sale

Matthew Krishanu
Bedroom, 2021
Oil on canvas
35x30 cm
13¾x11¾ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0019)
Not for Sale





Matthew Krishanu
Installation View, 'Arrow and Pulpit'
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Matthew Krishanu
Tree Climbing (Two Boys), 2021
Oil on board
45x35 cm
17¾x13¾ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0008)



“Childhood is something I’ve circled for a long time, going back to my BA in Exeter. The impact of childhood experience is so resonant because I moved to England at the age of 12; all the atmospheres of early childhood ended when I left Bangladesh and started living in a completely different world. The paintings I’m making now are about revisiting a whole set of emotions and atmospheres, elements that I think of as being very much a part of me.”

– Matthew Krishanu
As told to David Trigg
Studio International, 2021

Matthew Krishanu
Two Boys on a Horse, 2021
Oil and acrylic on board
35x25 cm
13¾x9⅞ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0013)



Matthew Krishanu
Boys with Bows, 2020
Acrylic on board
35x25 cm
13¾x9⅞ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0016)





Matthew Krishanu
Stone Horse, 2021
Oil on canvas
40x45 cm
15¾x17¾ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0007)



Matthew Krishanu
Communion, 2017
Oil and acrylic on canvas
140x200 cm
55 $\frac{1}{8}$ x78 $\frac{3}{4}$ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0021)



Matthew Krishanu
Communion, 2017
Detail



Matthew Krishanu
Communion, 2017
Detail



Matthew Krishanu
Three Figures (Crucifixion), 2021
Oil on canvas
180×140 cm
70 $\frac{7}{8}$ ×55 $\frac{1}{8}$ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0035)



Matthew Krishanu
Three Figures (Crucifixion), 2021
Detail



Matthew Krishanu
Installation View, 'Arrow and Pulpit'
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Matthew Krishanu
Shrine, 2021
Oil on board
30x25 cm
11¼x9⅞ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0018)



Matthew Krishanu
Sloping Roof, 2019
Oil on board
30x25 cm
11¼x9⅞ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0017)



Matthew Krishanu
Mother and Baby, 2020
Oil on canvas
35x30 cm
13¾x11¾ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0028)



Matthew Krishanu
Empty Church (standing), 2021
Oil on canvas
40x30 cm
15¾x11¾ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0031)



Matthew Krishanu
Two Boys (bricks), 2021
Oil on canvas
45x35 cm
17¾x13¾ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0011)



“Krishanu’s paintings are
a meticulous balance of
tension and meditation.”

– Laura Cumming
The Guardian, 2021

Matthew Krishanu
Two Boys with Bow and Arrow, 2021
Oil on canvas
45x35 cm
17¼x13¾ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0009)





Matthew Krishanu
Crucifix and Cutouts, 2016
Oil and acrylic on canvas
60x75 cm
23⁵/₈x29¹/₂ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0020)

Matthew Krishanu
Woman and Chalice, 2019
Oil on canvas
45x35 cm
17¼x13¾ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0022)



Matthew Krishanu
Baptism (Priest and Baby), 2020
Oil on canvas
40x30 cm
15¾x11¾ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0024)





Matthew Krishanu
Altar (Orange), 2021
Oil on board
35x45 cm
15 $\frac{3}{4}$ x19 $\frac{3}{4}$ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0030)



Matthew Krishanu
Hymn Numbers, 2020
Oil on board
20x25 cm
7⁷/₈x9⁷/₈ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0025)

Matthew Krishanu
Bible and Bunting, 2020
Oil on board
25x20 cm
9⁷/₈x7⁷/₈ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0023)





Matthew Krishanu
Bunting (blue), 2021
Oil on board
15x20 cm
5 $\frac{7}{8}$ x7 $\frac{7}{8}$ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0027)



Matthew Krishanu
Bunting (line), 2021
Oil on board
20x25 cm
7⁷/₈x9⁷/₈ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0029)

Matthew Krishanu
Pink Christ, 2020
Oil on board
25x20 cm
9 7/8 x 7 7/8 in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0026)



Matthew Krishanu
Pink Crucifix with Flowers, 2021
Oil on canvas
40x35 cm
15¾x11¾ in
Unique
(KRISHANU-2021-0031)





Matthew Krishanu
Pink Crucifix with Flowers, 2021
Detail

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