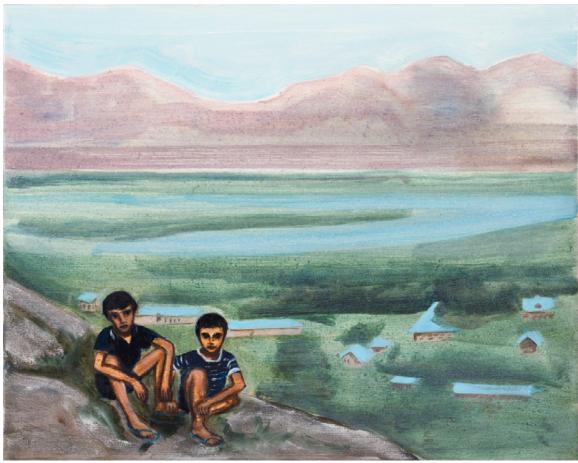


LGDR



Matthew Krishanu. Two Boys (Mountains, Kashmir), 2021. Oil on canvas, 15 % × 19 % × 1 inches (40 × 50 × 2.5 cm)

Allie Biswas on Matthew Krishanu

Memories of childhood permeate the subtropical world that Matthew Krishanu constructs in his evocative paintings. In these works, the past is distilled and reassembled to create vivid scenes that feel fused to a former time. Tangible environments shape these narratives: powdery pastel terrains bookended by cloudless blue skies and pools of turquoise water, interior spaces (particularly churches) incorporate palm trees and other vernacular additions, such as primary-color streamers that cascade from the ceiling. Especially critical to these precise, atmospheric scenes are the artist's subjects. The mostly Brown figures who occupy Krishanu's compositions—Indian and Bangladeshi children, in the main—reflect the artist's own biography, namely the first eleven years of his life, which were spent in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and included visits to West Bengal, India. Born in

Bradford, England, to an Indian mother and a White, English father, Krishanu generates his paintings from this formative period, which made him aware of people "not just as individuals, but also as very specific cultural groupings."

The artist's paintings of himself and his brother, which form the Another Country series, initiated in 2012, mark an important transitional point in Krishanu's practice and led him to producing works in series—a method that now guides his practice. In Boy Among Rocks (Kashmir) (2020) and Boat (2018), the young subjects perform acts of day-to-day heroism, commanding the picture plane as they seamlessly interact with the land. The broad, concentrated brushstrokes of the former work, which emit the weight of the rocks as forcefully as the rapid speed of the flowing river, and which relay Krishanu's affinity for dense abstraction, contrast with the glacial stillness of the latter, in which the mark-making is noticeably subdued, forming uninterrupted sections of translucent color.

Although based on real accounts, sourced from family photographs, Krishanu's subjects resist autobiographical ties. Insead, bloodlines are solely relied upon for the purpose of "feeling that I can use and own the subject," as the artist explains. This emotional familiarity allows Krishanu to forge life within his portraits through subjects that are as self-assured (*Boy with Bow and Arrow*, 2021) as they are interdependent (*Two Boys [Mountains, Kashmir]*, 2021). These charged narratives not only carry the reveries, joys, and hesitations of their subjects; they also convey Krishanu's formal engagement with other artists. Walter Sickert's *Portrait of an Afghan Gentleman* (c. 1895) and *La Hollandaise* (1906)—which, for Krishanu, are "primarily about the paint itself"—have been longstanding references for the artist, while the taut compositional structures used by Félix



Matthew Krishanu, *Boat*, 2018, Oil on canvas, 78 3/4 x 118 x 1 inches (200 x 300 x 2.5 cm)



Matthew Krishanu, *Mission*, 2020, Oil on canvas, 71 x 94 1/2 x 1 inches (180 x 240 x 2.5 cm)

Vallotton in works such as *Le Ballon* (1899) are evident in Krishanu's own approach. His *Four Poster Bed* (2022) focuses on a lone, sleeping figure positioned toward the middle of the canvas, whose serene state is mirrored by the stillness of the empty room, made luminous through gauzy layers of pale green and white. Similarly, *Boy and River* (2022) is an exercise in geometric formalism, where the triangular terrain in the foreground is reiterated by the vast mountainscape in the backdrop, both of which accentuate the diminutive size of the solitary child in the frame.

The artist's attentiveness to non-White subjects is "for people who want to see that as normal and resonant and powerful—and not just political." While Krishanu's scenes of boyhood help to rectify the historical objectification of Brown bodies within Western art history—figures that have often been handled anthropologically, denied individuality or soul—his *Mission* paintings, also begun in 2012, are a response to prevailing pictorial representations of Christianity as a European religion.

Such images, ingrained within our collective unconscious, are not without consequence. As Krishanu says, "Western art depicts Christ as White. It's an art-historical issue, which has then become a tool of White supremacy." Similarly, Krishanu's works reflect on how the Church has been co-opted as an imperial force. The artist's paintings of the church relate to the work carried out by his parents in Bangladesh. Krishanu's father was a priest who provided ministerial services, while his mother (a Bengali Brahmin who was born into a Christian family following her father's conversion from

Hinduism) founded a women's theological organization that reinterpreted scripture from female perspectives. The scene rendered in *Mission* (2020), a sweeping canvas compared to Krishanu's more intimately scaled compositions, would have been a regular occurrence for the artist. Surrounded by an extensive congregation of Bangladeshi men and children, the artist's father stands on a stage, noticeably the only White person in the scene. An oversized figure who almost appears to hover above the crowd, the priest's physicality creates distance. His sterile gaze cannot be met. Krishanu's tactic is discernible yet unobtrusive—an undercurrent throughout his work. In this painting, it is the White figure who is portrayed as foreign, as strange—as the conspicuous "other."

In Communion (Kneeling) (2022), the artist continues to quietly dismantle the notion of White Christian leadership as the ideal. The two figures who occupy the center of this composition represent the artist's father and a Bangladeshi bishop, one juxtaposed with the other. While the Bengali figure is portrayed as authoritative and revered, as he carefully places his hand on a youth's head in a blessing ritual, his White counterpart is immediately diminished by a blank stare. The tactility demonstrated by the bishop contrasts with the father's rigid pose as he tightly grips a glass with both hands.

Communion (Kneeling) also speaks to the artist's wider project of reclaiming Christianity as an Asian faith. Krishanu often navigates these ideas through discreet gestures, such as the painting that hangs on the wall in Four Figures (Crucifixion) (2021), which presents a Bangladeshi man, dressed in a lungi, on the cross. In infiltrating his paintings with such images, Krishanu challenges what a crucifixion can look like, while underlining his clear interest in the skin color of Christ as represented in art. In other works, Krishanu's approach is more forthcoming. Four Nuns (2020) features a group of Indian women whose collective dynamic is palpable. Resplendent in white saris, with cross pendants resting on their chests, the interiority of these figures creates a quiet yet persuasive force, reminiscent of portraits by Alice Neel or Gwen John. In this way, Krishanu's works are less about the legacies of empire—or even religion itself—as they could be (mis)read, but relate instead to the matter of autonomy. The Mission paintings suggest that culture—in this case, faith—is a phenomenon that is indigenous and homegrown, rather than merely transplanted or enforced by Europeans.

Krishanu's works, in the end, seem to suggest that it is nature to which we might devote ourselves, just as the *Two Boys* do. The artist's *House of God* paintings position the fading architectural remnants of colonialism amidst gleaming landscapes. We are left in awe of *this* world.

LGDR

Memory and imagination are central to the work of the London-based painter Matthew Krishanu (b. 1980, Bradford), whose figurative paintings explore childhood, religion and the legacies of colonialism and empire. Recent exhibitions include *Mixing It Up: Painting Today*, Hayward Gallery, London (2021); Coventry Biennial, Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum and Herbert Art Gallery & Museum (2021); *Everyday Heroes*, Hayward Gallery/Southbank Centre, London (2020); *A Rich Tapestry*, Ikon Gallery at Lahore Biennale (2020); and *New Figurations*, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai (2019). Solo exhibitions include *Arrow and Pulpit*, Tanya Leighton, Berlin (2021); *Picture Plane*, Niru Ratnam Gallery, London (2020); *House of Crows*, Matt's Gallery, London (2019); *The Sun Never Sets*, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham (2019) and Huddersfield Art Gallery (2018). He has works in collections including the Arts Council Collection, Government Art Collection (UK); Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery; Huddersfield Art Gallery; The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, India; and Jiangsu Art Museum, China.

About LGDR

Founded by Dominique Lévy, Brett Gorvy, Amalia Dayan, and Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, LGDR is a collaborative international art venture that brings expertise and vision to its disciplines. LGDR represents and partners with artists and estates—realizing seminal projects and furthering legacies. From placing primary and secondary works of the highest quality and advising clients on the development of their collections, to harnessing its institutional relationships and presenting a curated program with scholarly publications, LGDR puts artistic voices first.

In forming LGDR, the four partners merge their respective specialties across 20th- and 21st-century art; their individual reputations as leaders and tastemakers; and their separate histories as principals of galleries with exemplary exhibition programs. Both international and local in practice and perspective, LGDR has unique spaces and unmatched market knowledge in New York, London, Paris, and Hong Kong in addition to off-site presentations and satellite teams around the world.

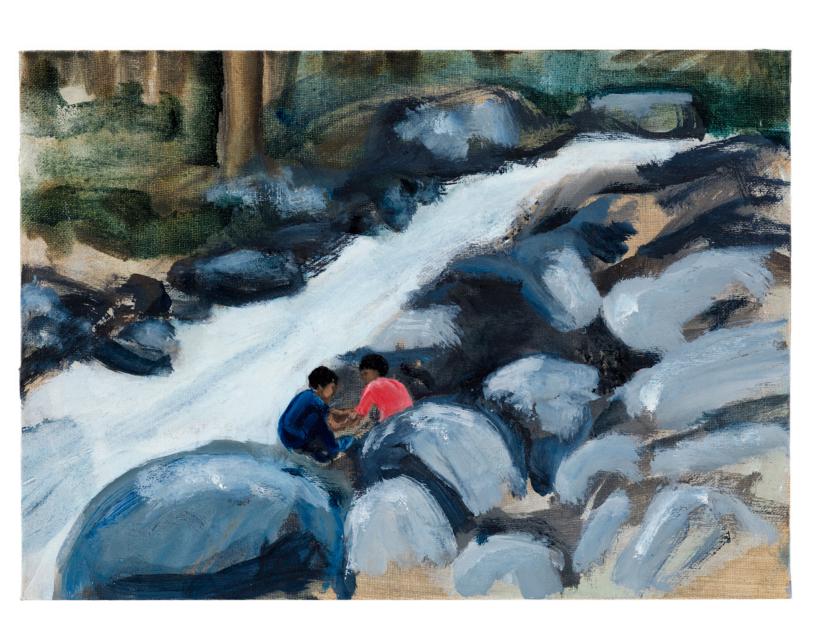
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3 East 89 Street New York NY 10128 Wed — Sat, 11am — 6pm +1 212 979 0001

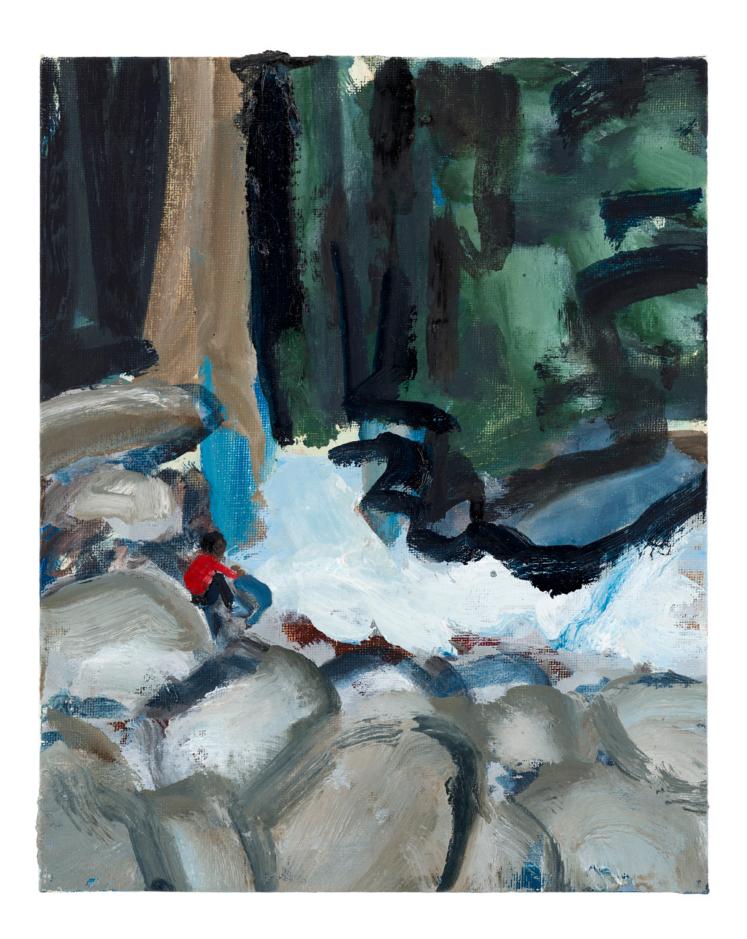
Press Inquiries

Michelle Than, Company Agenda, michelle@companyagenda.com





Two Boys Among Rocks (Kashmir), 2020 Oil on board $10 \times 13 \% \times 1$ inches ($25 \times 35 \times 2.5$ cm)



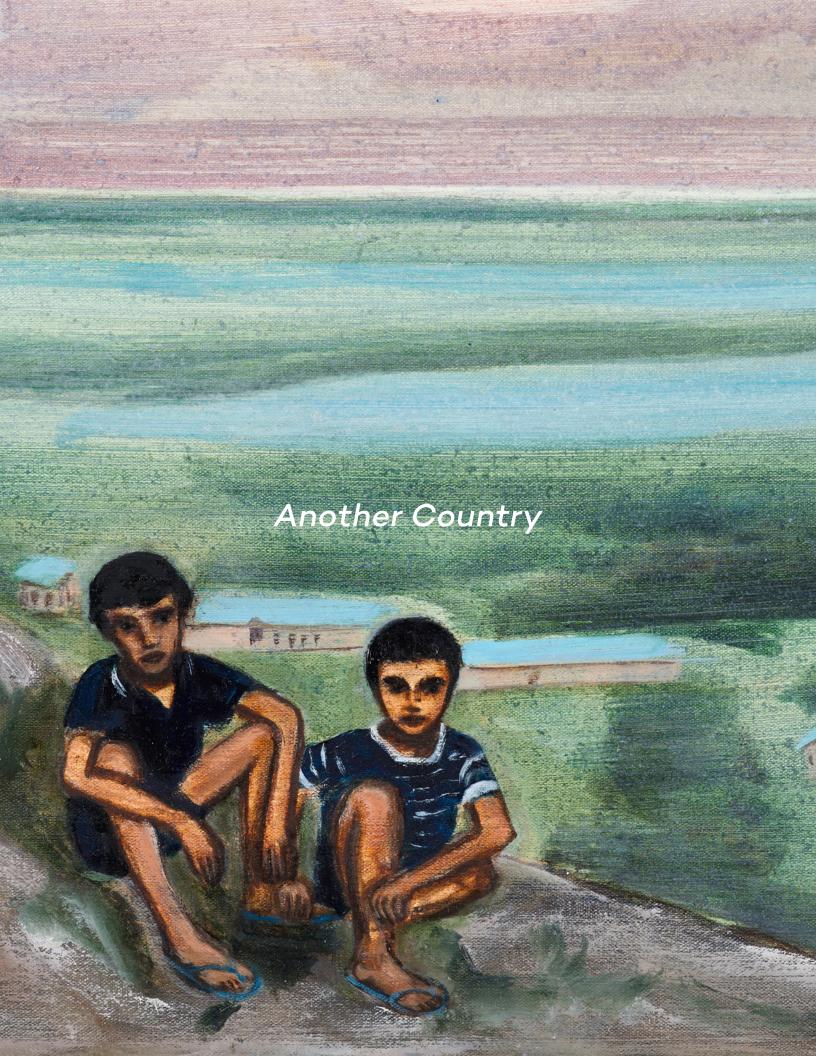
Boy Among Rocks (Kashmir), 2020 Oil on board 10 x 8 x 1 inches (25 x 20 x 2.5 cm)





Forest Scene, 2022 Oil on canvas $17 \% \times 23 \% \times 1$ inches (45 x 60 x 2.5 cm)







Boy on Boat, 2022 Acrylic on canvas $17 \% \times 23 \% \times 1$ inches (45 x 60 x 2.5 cm)

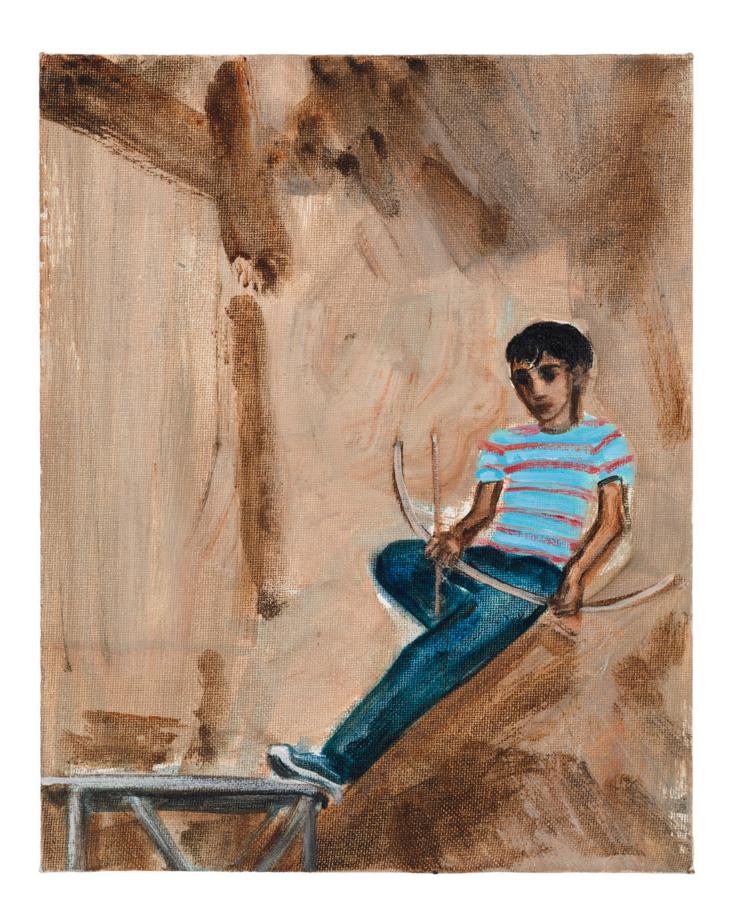




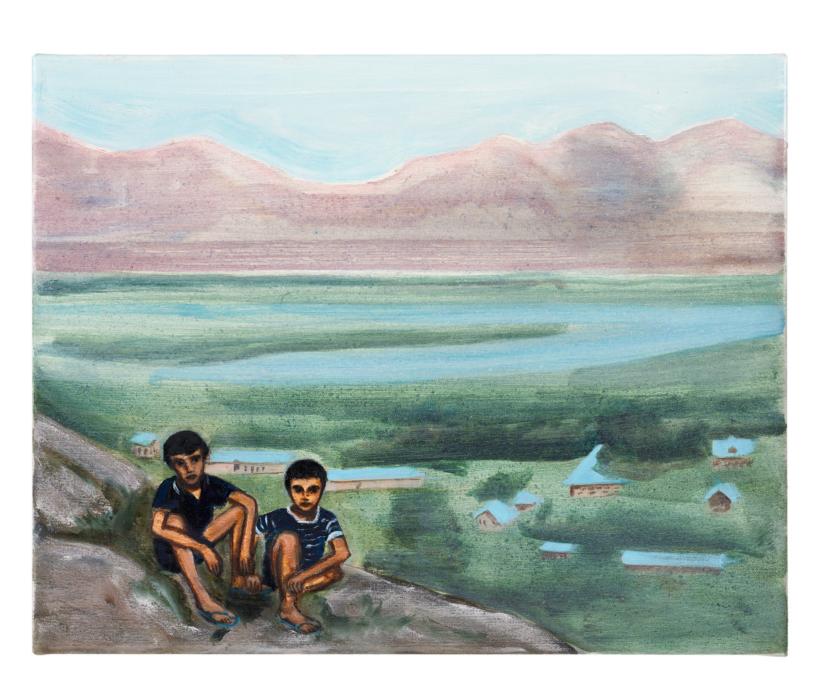
Boat, 2018 Oil on canvas 78 ¾ x 118 x 1 inches (200 x 300 x 2.5 cm)



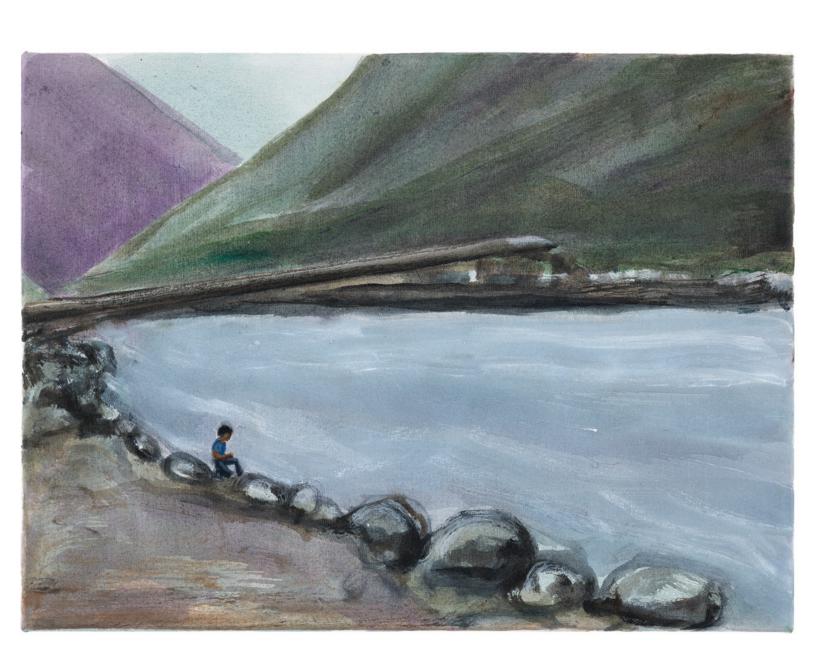




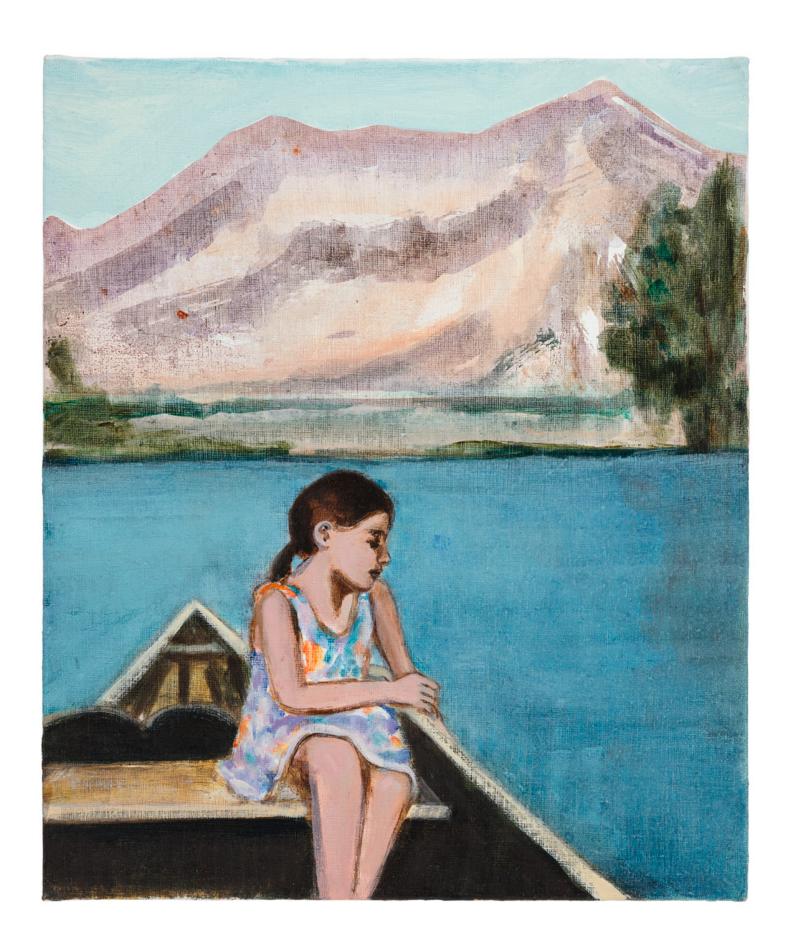
Matthew Krishanu Boy with Bow and Arrow, 2021 Acrylic on board 10 x 8 x 1 inches (25 x 20 x 2.5 cm)



Two Boys (Mountains, Kashmir), 2021 Oil on canvas $15 \% \times 19 \% \times 1$ inches (40 x 50 x 2.5 cm)



Boy and River, 2022 Acrylic on canvas $17 \% \times 23 \% \times 1$ inches $(45 \times 60 \times 2.5 \text{ cm})$



Matthew Krishanu

Girl in Boat (Kashmir), 2021

Acrylic and oil on board

11 34 x 9 34 x 1 inches (30 x 25 x 2.5 cm)



Kashmir (Two Girls), 2021 Oil on canvas $47 \frac{1}{4} \times 59 \times 1$ inches (120 \times 150 \times 2.5 cm)







Two Boys on Rocks, 2022 Acrylic on canvas $15 \% \times 19 \% \times 1$ inches (40 x 50 x 2.5 cm)

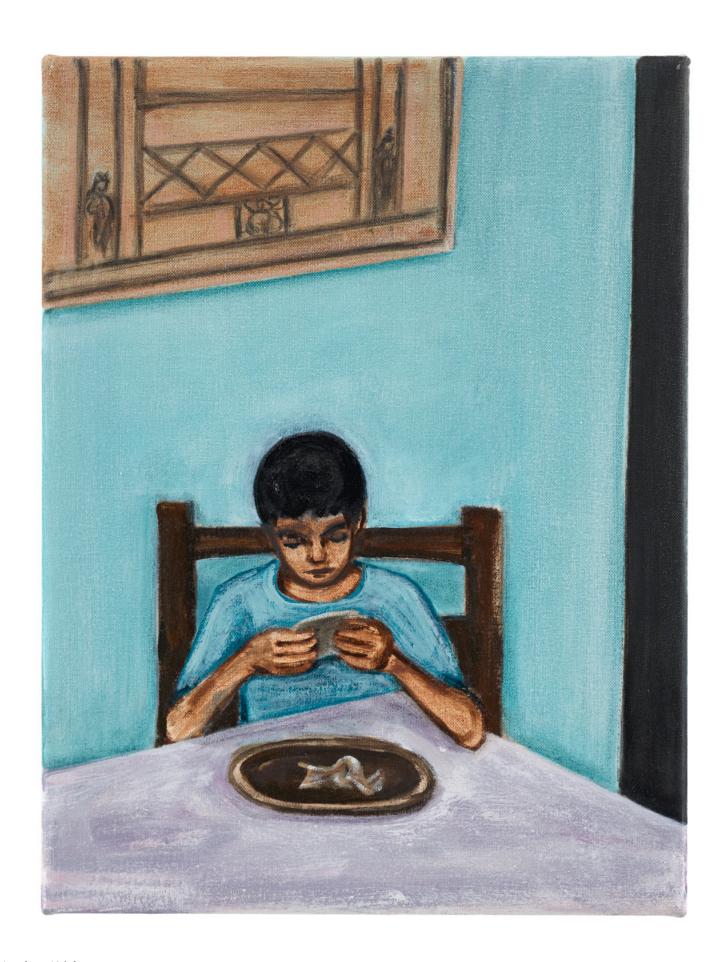




Four Poster Bed, 2022 Acrylic on canvas $17 \% \times 21 \% \times 1$ inches (45 x 55 x 2.5 cm)







Matthew Krishanu
Boy at Table, 2022
Oil on canvas $15 \frac{3}{4} \times 11 \frac{3}{4} \times 1 \text{ inches (40 \times 30 \times 2.5 cm)}$





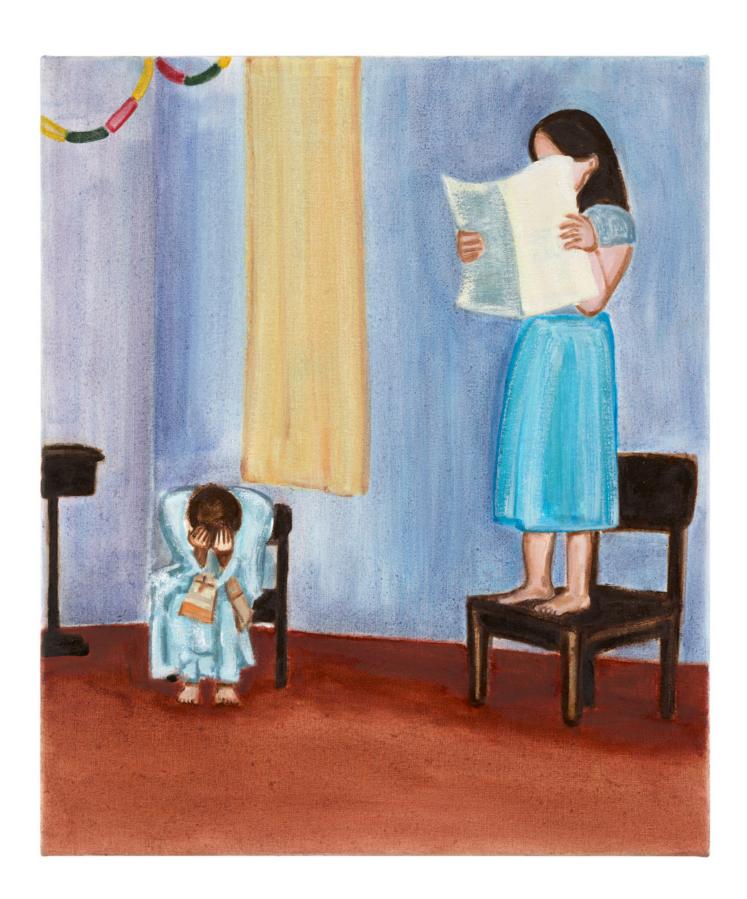


Four Nuns, 2020 Oil on canvas 70 3 4 x 55 x 1 3 4 inches (180 x 140 x 4.5 cm)



Installation view *Matthew Krishanu: Undercurrents*, LGDR, New York, NY
April 7 - May 14, 2022





Matthew Krishanu Girl Reading (with Priest), 2022 Oil on canvas

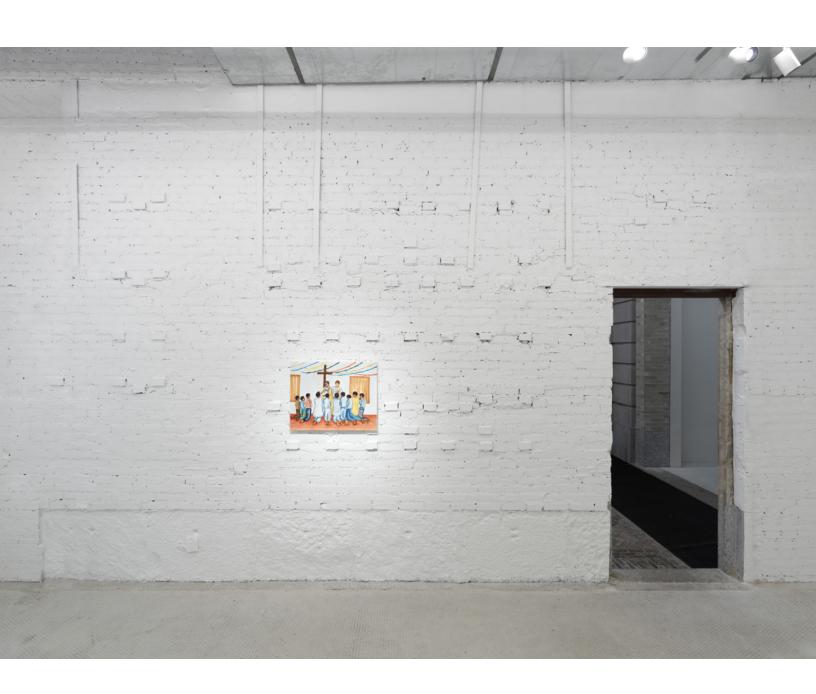
 $23 \frac{1}{2} \times 19 \frac{3}{4} \times 1$ inches (60 x 50 x 2.5 cm)





Communion (Kneeling), 2022 Oil on canvas $21\frac{1}{2} \times 27\frac{1}{2} \times 1$ inches (55 × 70 × 2.5 cm)

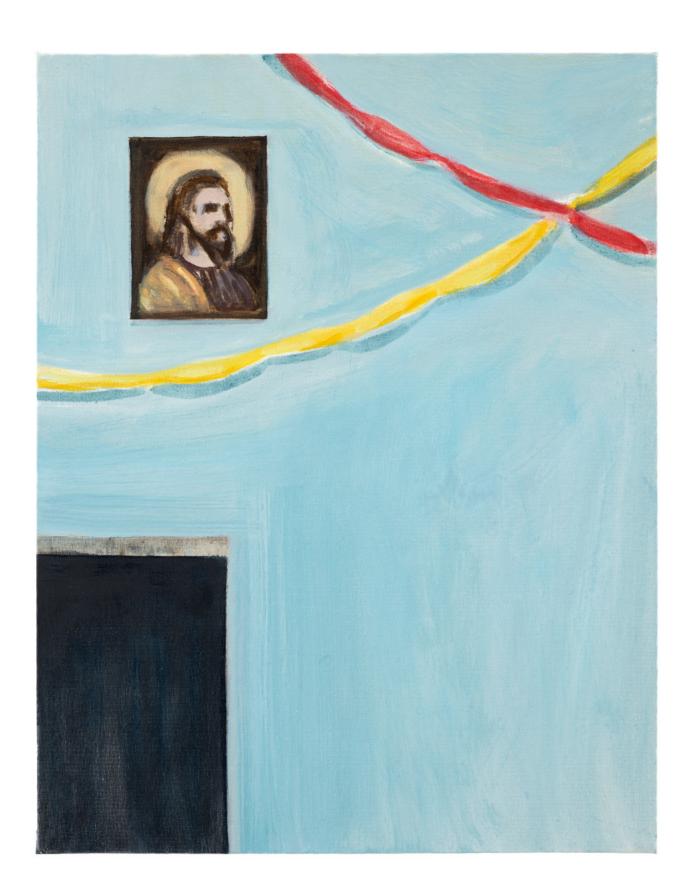




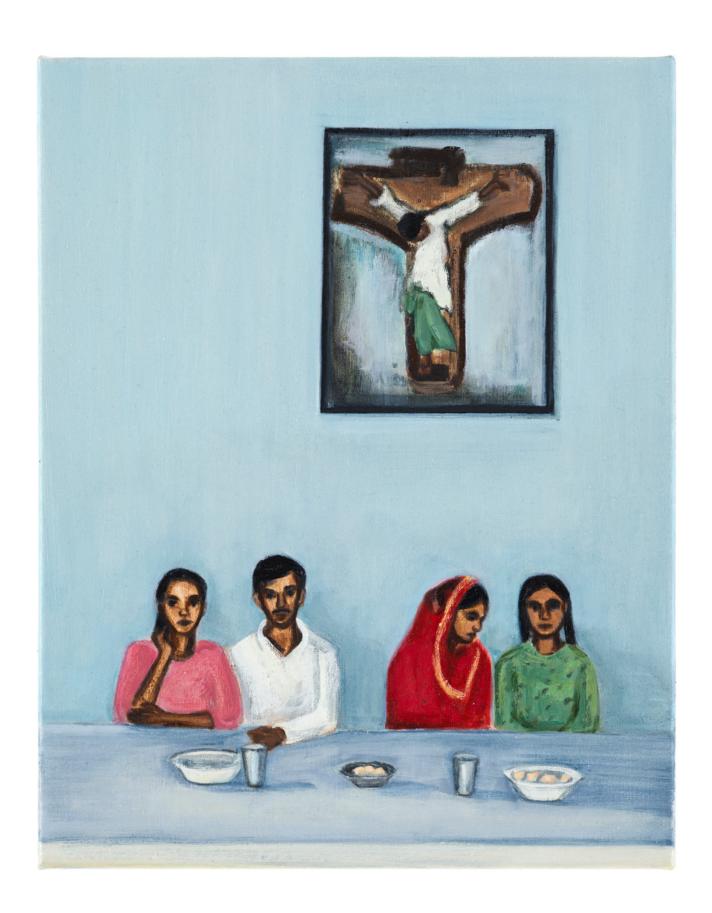


Priest and Baby, 2021 Oil on canvas $15 \frac{3}{4} \times 12 \times 1$ inches (40 × 30 × 2.5 cm)

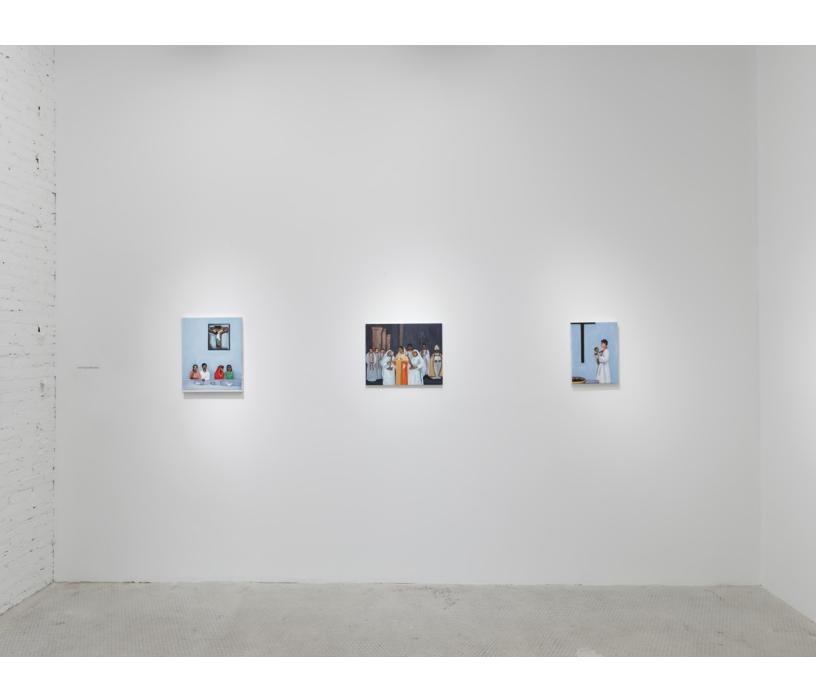




Matthew Krishanu Streamers (with painting), 2022 Oil on board 17 3/4 x 13 3/4 x 1 inches (45 x 35 x 2.5 cm)



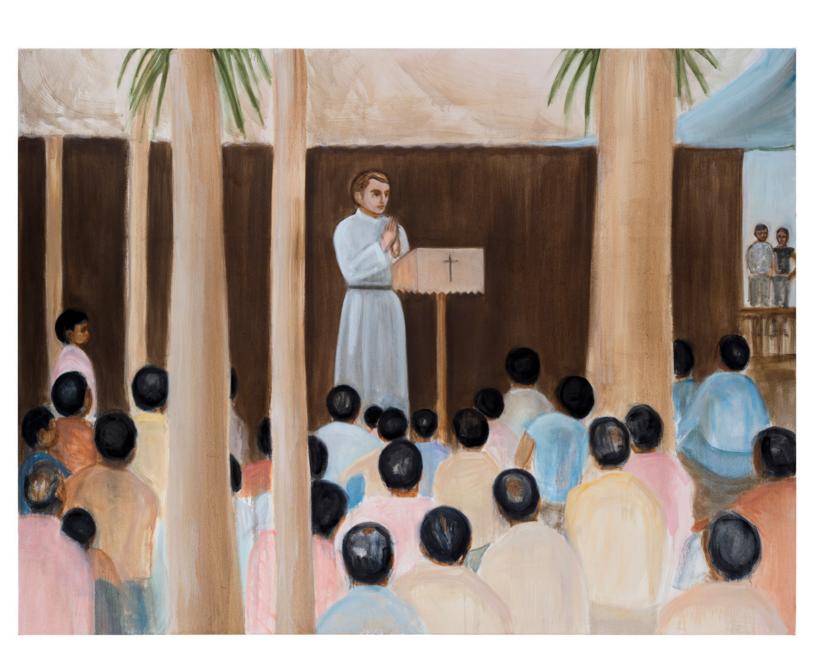
Four Figures (Crucifixion), 2021 Oil on canvas $19 \% \times 15 \% \times 1$ inches (50 x 40 x 2.5 cm)





Preaching (Candles and Cross), 2020 Oil on board $15 \% \times 19 \% \times 1$ inches (40 x 50 x 2.5 cm)

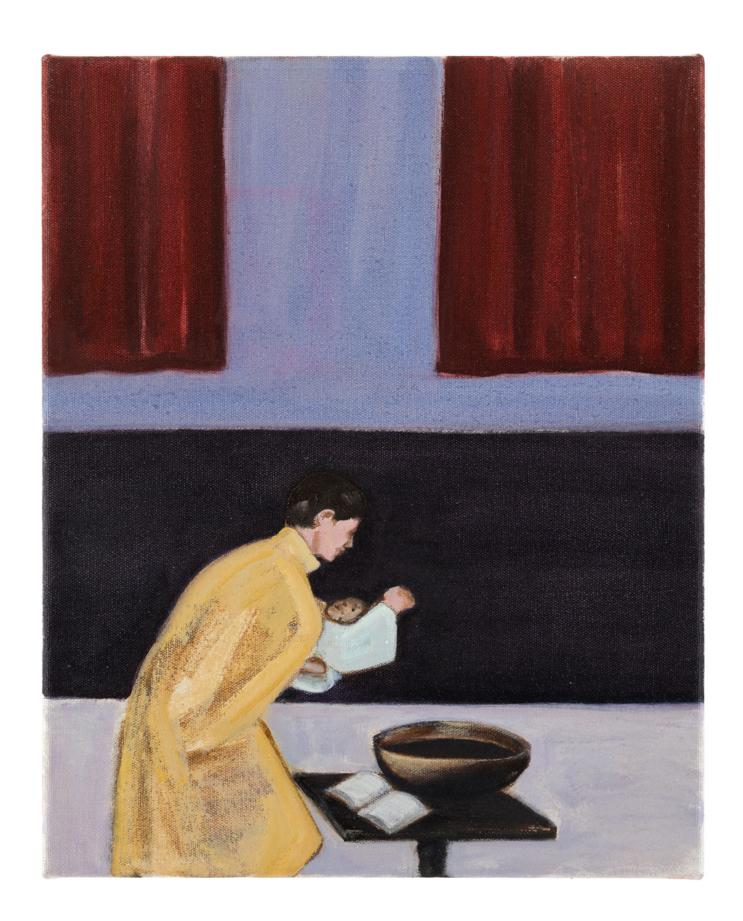




Mission, 2020 Oil on canvas $71 \times 94 \frac{1}{2} \times 1$ inches (180 × 240 × 2.5 cm)

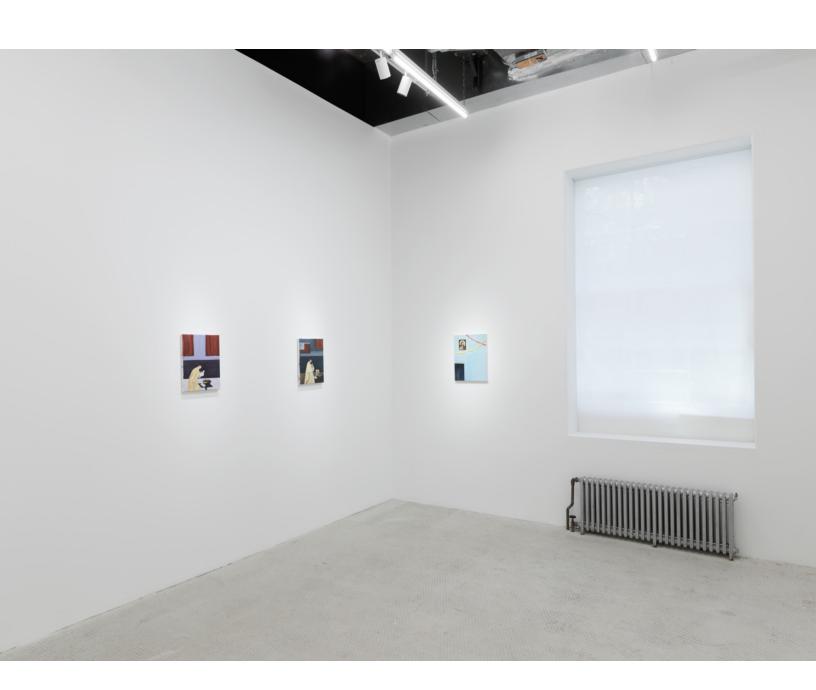




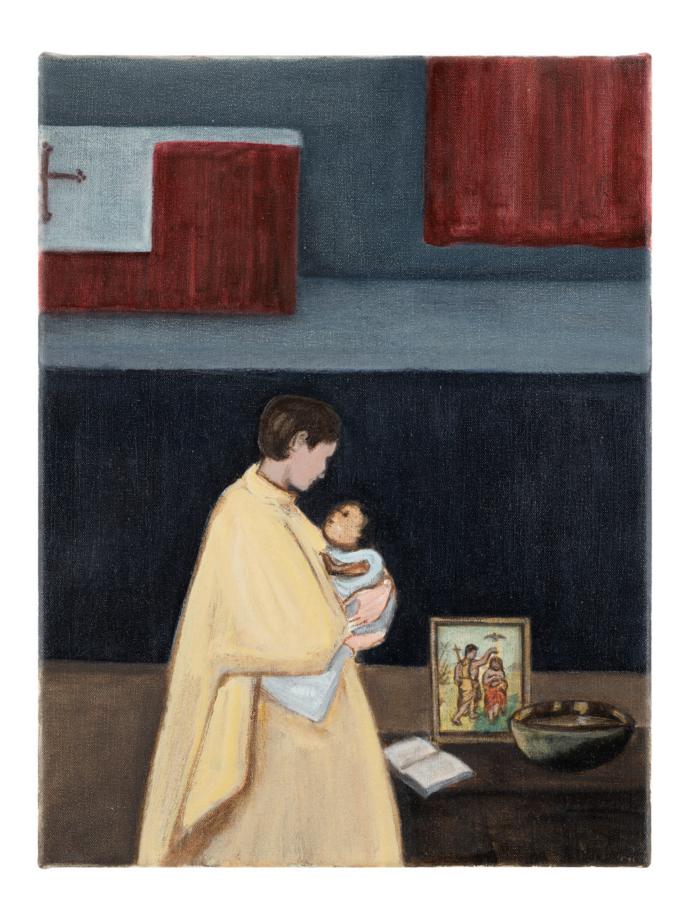


Matthew Krishanu Priest and Baby (Baptism), 2021

Oil on canvas 15 % x 11 % x 1 inches (40 x 30 x 2.5 cm)

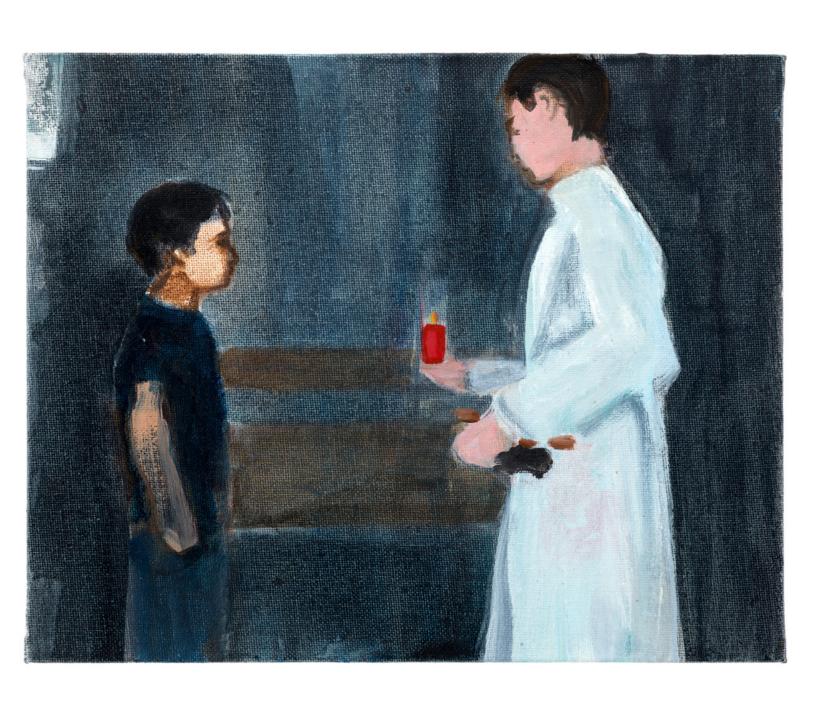


Installation view



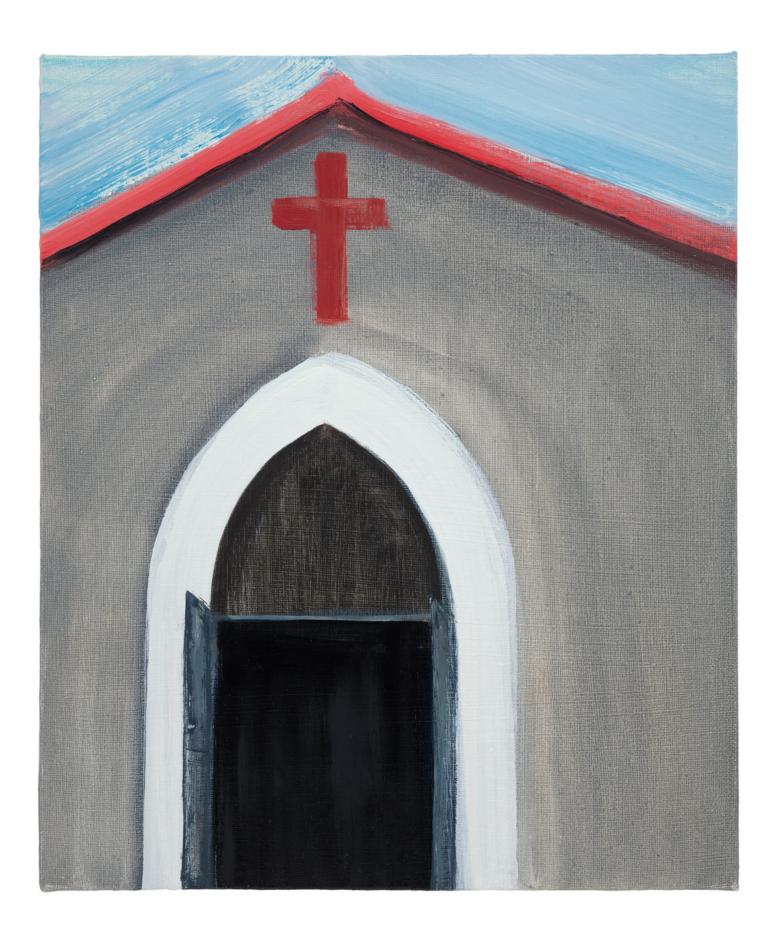
Baptism (Priest and Baby with painting), 2020 Oil on canvas $15 \frac{3}{4} \times 12 \times 1$ inches (40 × 30 × 2.5 cm)





Matthew Krishanu Boy and Priest, 2022 Oil on board 7 % x 9 % x 1 inches (20 x 25 x 2.5 cm)

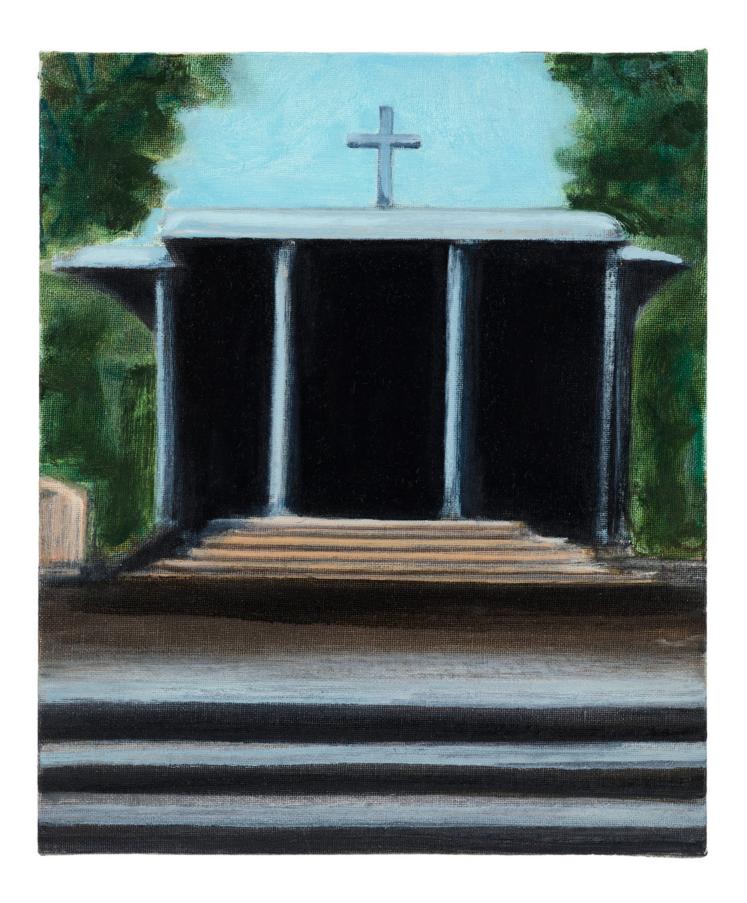




Open Door, 2020 Oil on board 11 ³/₄ x 10 x 1 inches (30 x 25 x 2.5 cm)



Matthew Krishanu Cross and Palm Tree, 2016 Oil on board 15 3/4 x 11 3/4 x 1 inches (40 x 30 x 2.5 cm)



Chapel, 2021 Oil on board 11 ¾ x 10 x 1 inches (30 x 25 x 2.5 cm)

