



The Stand-Ins

The Stand–Ins

Figurative Painting from the Collection
7 October–19 December 2021

Maxwell Alexandre, Anna Glantz,
Philip Guston, Jamian Juliano–Villani,
Jordan Kasey, Ella Kruglyanskaya,
Maria Lassnig, Kate Lyddon,
Christina Quarles, Avery Singer,
Dorothea Tanning, Henry Taylor,
Caragh Thuring, Tesfaye Urgessa,
Willem Weismann, Robin F. Williams,
Issy Wood, Rose Wylie,
Jakub Julian Ziolkowski

The Stand-Ins brings together 19 artists who deploy autobiographical elements and a cast of imagined characters in the construction of their paintings and narratives. Showcasing works from the Zabłudowicz Collection, the exhibition maps lines of influence across generations, featuring seminal figures alongside important new voices.

The term 'stand-in' suggests a temporary replacement, an understudy or avatar filling in for an absent lead. Recently the vulnerability of bodies has been brought into sharp focus for us all. As we step back into the physical and social world after an enforced period of separation, how might we have changed? Who, or what, will we choose to present to others? This air of uncertainty about interactions in the world we share cannot help but permeate artists' studios today, but this concern has a long history that predates the contemporary moment.

The exhibition recognises the diversity of approaches found in figurative painting today, from those that overtly quote art historical styles to those that are more closely linked to observation and realism, or that move towards abstraction. Rather than simply depicting exterior appearances, these artists map interior psychological spaces. Their process shows the sheer exuberance, imagination and humour with which artists continue to reimagine themselves and others via paint. Formal experimentation in composition and the use of materials often leads to the deconstruction of the body into parts: hollow vessels, mask-like layers and bundles of gestures. Sabotaging the idea of a singular self or fixed identity, this group of paintings looks at bodies from the inside out.

A prevalent feature of the dialogue around painting today is the acknowledgement of influences from the past and the need for tenacity and longevity in art practice. Here the distinctive approaches of three landmark figures – Dorothea Tanning, Philip Guston and Maria Lassnig – provide a framework for the exhibition. Tanning was a pioneering artist associated with surrealism who developed her own realm of domestic disquiet and dream-like myth. Guston used humour and awkwardness to point directly at the injustices and absurdities he saw around him, and to explore how paintings could be self-contained but could also tell stories, famously taking a bold step away from abstraction to a cartoon-like figuration to do so. And in an approach she termed ‘body awareness’, Lassnig placed herself at the centre of an unflinching take on how flesh and mind intertwine, shift and sometimes come apart.

The ability to remain responsive and reflexive in one’s painting practice is evident in the work of many of the artists in the exhibition. Some have had long, rich careers; others are right at the beginning. Many look to, or indeed work in, different mediums, such as moving image, sculpture or music, alongside their painting practice. But for all these artists, painting is a point of departure as well as arrival. Acting as an enduring frame of reference and a history to be kicked against, it remains both relevant and mysterious in our digital age. The representation of the human body in art is not going away and, right now, expressing this as a painted image feels resolutely urgent.

The exhibition is installed in the Main Hall, Middle Gallery, Back Gallery and Mezzanine. Access to the Mezzanine is via stairs from the entrance foyer.

Main Hall

Philip Guston

b. 1913, Montreal, Canada. d. 1980, Woodstock, New York, USA

In 1968, when Guston controversially switched from abstraction to a type of representation, his work began to include boots, light bulbs, Ku Klux Klan hoods, Richard Nixon, cigarettes, food and clocks. As well as being interested in telling stories about the society in which he lived, Guston simultaneously pointed to – and marvelled at – the strangeness of translating such things into the medium of painting.

The Canvas is a spare, still work that possesses a melancholy air and displays links to the surrealist notion of the metamorphosis of objects. In a wry comment on the utility, and possible redundancy, of art, a chunky, fleshy pink canvas, its surface reminiscent of Guston's earlier abstract expressionist paintings, leans casually against a grey brick wall like an abandoned mattress, its single red eye staring intently into the distance.

Philip Guston

The Canvas, 1973

Oil on canvas

172.8 × 203.6 cm

Jakub Julian Ziolkowski

b. 1980, Poland

Lives and works between Kraków and Zamość,
Poland

Jakub Julian Ziolkowski turns the canvas into a laboratory, in which myriad interrelated motifs create phantasmagorical narratives. His paintings encompass multiple stylistic references from art history and popular culture, such as Renaissance and baroque painting, Hieronymus Bosch's grotesque figures and visions, surrealism, German expressionism, graphic novels and street art. Ziolkowski transforms this archaeological take on visual imagery into a darkly humorous personal universe. *Untitled* comprises five small paintings, each offering a partial view of a body. Cigarettes, shoes, muscles and organs are painted in an exaggerated visceral manner, suggesting temporary adaptations and additions to an anonymous figure – or figures.

Jakub Julian Ziolkowski

Untitled, 2006

Oil on canvas

Five parts, 40 × 30 cm each

Maria Lassnig

b. 1919, Kappel am Krappfeld, Austria. d. 2014,
Vienna, Austria

Using herself as the subject of her paintings, drawings and animations, Maria Lassnig focused on what she termed 'body awareness': the physical and emotional experience of being in the world. Building on the colour and drama of early-twentieth-century Viennese expressionism and the strange psychological spaces of surrealism, Lassnig created raw, highly engaging images. *Der Ritter (The Knight)* is a blunt, unsettling picture. A phallic shape resembling a head on a neck – or, as the title hints, perhaps a body encased in armour – stands frozen, filling the frame. The gash that runs across the form resembles a razor blade. This connects to other paintings by Lassnig in which a body is morphed with domestic objects, such as saucepans or cheese graters. The left section of the image could be read as a downturned mouth, caught in a shout or a scream.

Maria Lassnig

Der Ritter (The Knight), 1991

Oil on canvas

200 × 144.3 cm

Christina Quarles

b. 1985, USA

Lives and works in Los Angeles, USA

In her expressive, technically complex paintings, Christina Quarles strives for what she describes as ‘the experience of living in a body rather than looking at a body’. Formal devices such as stencilled areas of pattern offer a scaffold for figures that stretch and contort around and through the picture plane; the dynamics of their interrelation are left open to the viewer’s interpretation. Quarles’ interest in indeterminacy comes from her lived experience as a queer cis multiracial woman who is often presumed to be white. *I’d a Scope Eyes* features a pair of figures in a horizontal arrangement. Long limbs reach, kick, pull and caress, while the two bodies are linked across zones of time and space by sweeping red-brushed gestures. A monumental yellow flower with a needle-sharp stem stands on the left of the unprimed canvas, conveying a mix of joy and threat.

Christina Quarles

I’d a Scope Eyes, 2018

Acrylic on canvas

196 × 244.6 cm

Tesfaye Urgessa

b. 1983, Ethiopia

Lives and works in Nürtingen, Germany

Tesfaye Urgessa's paintings feature distinctively posed figures in settings that sit somewhere between the domestic and the surreal. Urgessa emigrated from Addis Ababa to Stuttgart in 2014 to study, and his work brings Ethiopian iconography into dialogue with the styles of diverse European artists from the modern canon. Urgessa's paintings pointedly address the contemporary moment, in terms of both the highly charged intimacy of personal relations and the wider topics of identity and migration. *The holy family despair* is simultaneously tender and fraught. The couple cradle a new baby, and the parents' legs are entwined as they sit. The pair's facial expressions are intense and distracted, however, implying conflicting emotions. The white-gloved hand belonging to the statue on the wall behind, which lifts the foliage headdress of the seated man, adds a layer of unreality.

Tesfaye Urgessa

The holy family despair, 2021

Oil on canvas

200 × 200 cm

VUPs 7, 2019

Oil on canvas

120 × 110 cm

Willem Weismann

b. 1977, Netherlands

Lives and works in London, UK

Willem Weismann explores the possibility of paintings acting as ‘information systems’ and stores of meaning. His work explicitly makes connections to other forms of archives, both physical and virtual: the memories we carry in our heads, libraries of books, vast online stores of data, and the stratified layers of history beneath our pavements and soil. The surfaces of Weismann’s paintings make evident his active efforts to make sense of a world in flux. His *Burnt book* series from 2014 came from an urge to make a representation of something shocking and traumatic, yet to do so with subtlety. For a year Weismann only painted with burnt coal black, testing out the legibility of the photographic reproduction of the works he created, and pointing to his own preference for his art to be experienced in the flesh. His subsequent works from the same year, *Reading about painting* and *Reading about writing* (on display in the Back Gallery), feature characters with their faces obscured and pressed up against the pages of books. Although the titles suggest people seeking a deeper connection to something, but possibly struggling to find it, the works can also be read as a heartfelt tribute to the act of getting lost and absorbed in thinking about art.

Willem Weismann

Burnt book III, 2014

Oil on canvas

56 × 65 cm

Burnt book VI, 2014

Oil on canvas

55 × 65 cm

Reading about writing, 2014

Oil on canvas

60 × 50 cm

Reading about painting, 2014

Oil on canvas

60 × 50 cm

Rose Wylie

b. 1934, UK

Lives and works in Kent, UK

Rose Wylie paints in a direct, effervescent style, full of texture and personality. Figures, objects, signs and words appear together in a distinctive lexicon that draws from the popular culture of entertainment and sport, but retains a renegade individuality. Humorous and emotional, Wylie's art uses seemingly simple forms to ask serious questions about what painting can do, and generously invites the viewer on a journey to experience the world as she perceives it. *Battle in Heaven (film notes)* is one of Wylie's ongoing cinema-inspired paintings, in which she works with memorable scenes from films she has watched. In this case it is a confrontational, violent Mexican film, *Battle in Heaven* (2005), by director Carlos Reygadas, which features an opening and closing shot of the back of a woman's head as she engages in a sex act. On the raw canvas, Wylie started by applying pale green underpainting to add vibrancy, much as Renaissance masters did. The bold, textured brushstrokes of hair and skin laid on top disarm, and the work takes on an air of romantic adventure, creating a distance from the atmosphere in the source material.

Rose Wylie

Battle in Heaven (film notes), 2008

Oil on canvas

183 × 336 cm

Middle Gallery

Maxwell Alexandre

b. 1990, Brazil

Lives and works in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Maxwell Alexandre's work observes the forces at play in the Rocinha favela, Rio de Janeiro, where he was raised and still lives. It is a diverse, densely populated neighbourhood in which the trinity of the evangelical church, organised crime and state violence are constantly present. In the artist's ongoing *Pardo é Papel* series he plays on the Portuguese word *pardo*, meaning 'brown', which refers to the widely available kraft paper he uses as a support for his work, as well as to the census category used to describe Afro-Brazilian people and others of mixed race. The work *I saw things I imagined* is a frenetic scene from a music concert. As the performers leap and crowd-surf, the crowd hold up phone screens, painted as glowing rectangles of warm yellow that cascade down the picture plane. What may look, at first glance, like gestural sweeps in the liquid shoe polish that Alexandre has used as his paint turn out, on closer inspection, to be the outlines of individuals in the crowd, linked in a celebratory mass. The scale and composition position the work as a contemporary take on monumental history painting.

Maxwell Alexandre

I saw things I imagined, 2020

Liquid shoe polish on brown kraft paper

320 × 480 cm

Dorothea Tanning

b. 1910, Galesburg, Illinois, USA. d. 2012 New York, USA

Dorothea Tanning was a pioneering artist who developed her own pictorial realm of domestic disquiet and dream-like spaces. Encountering surrealism in New York in the 1930s, she went on to produce highly influential paintings in the 1940s and 1950s involving aspects of self-portraiture, where the familiar was made strange, and desire and sexuality were brought to the fore. Over the subsequent decades Tanning experimented with abstraction, produced powerful installations of soft fabric sculptures, and was also a prolific poet. The painting *Early Politics* suggests, in an open-ended way, a dynamic of control, with the figure with raised arms in the foreground engaged in a ritual of sorts. A female figure seems to be in the process of being lifted from a blue slab into the sky, and a mysterious bug-eyed entity floats above. In interviews Tanning has suggested that the piece is a reflection on violence, and an affirmation of 'the wonderful will of human beings to prove their ancestry over the forces of so-called civilisation'.

Dorothea Tanning

Early Politics, 1988

Oil on canvas

165 × 133.2 cm

Back Gallery

Ella Kruglyanskaya

b. 1978, Latvia

Lives and works in New York, USA

Weaving together the graphic and the painterly, Ella Kruglyanskaya's work focusses on bawdy sexuality and the often fraught dynamics of social interaction. Although overtly drawing on cinema and advertising of the 1950s and 1960s and the history of European expressionist painting, the artist wears her references lightly, inviting a viewer's eyes and mind to leap into her compositions. *Puppeteers with a Big Face* shows two clearly unimpressed protagonists dressed in black holding up a sheet on which a line drawing of a third face appears, executed in the style of a confident sketch. The third face's severe bob, its glasses and angular features are reminiscent of a stereotype of an art or fashion impresario. Have the puppeteers been roped into an egotistic stunt by their employer? Is there rivalry between them for a promotion? Or maybe they are part of a performance that has gone awry.

Ella Kruglyanskaya

Trench, 2013

Oil on canvas

198.4 × 137.1 cm

Puppeteers with a Big Face, 2015

Oil and oil stick on linen

229 × 183 cm

Avery Singer

b. 1987, USA

Lives and works in New York, USA

Avery Singer's parents are both artists, and she grew up in a creative community. Fusing the tradition of painting with digital technologies, Singer builds and executes complex and theatrical images produced by hand using an airbrush. The initial stages of making take place inside 3D computer modelling software more often used by architects and designers. Singer's recent works have become highly layered and abstracted, with the picture plane often compressed to near impenetrability. *Happening*, from an earlier series, features a clearer image, although it is still disorientating. A group of figures – assembled as geometric, articulated forms reminiscent of life drawing mannequins – leans towards an assemblage on a pedestal. The room they occupy is fractured by shadows. As the title suggests, the work can be read as a satire on the assumed power of an art object or art moment, specifically in the context of the history of experimental art in New York, but also operates as a sincere homage to the importance of mystery and wonder.

Avery Singer

Happening, 2014

Acrylic on canvas

254 × 306 cm

Caragh Thuring

b. 1972, Belgium

Lives and works between London and Argyll, UK

Caragh Thuring's paintings display the active work of looking, taking apart and then reassembling our surroundings. The structural aspect of making pictures is brought to the fore through multiple techniques of printing, stitching and spraying. Objects that point to interior and exterior spaces – such as window panes, volcanoes, patterned cloth, cranes and bricks – recur across her canvases, showing Thuring's ongoing interest in the industries and processes that have built up around modern society. *Handelaar* (Dutch for 'trader' or 'seller') is a composition based around the sketched silhouette of a body in a dress, leaning dramatically, one arm and leg thrust out. The image feels as if it's been taken from an advertising or fashion spread, and Thuring picks up and runs with the triangulation of the pose within a layer of abstraction, shown as thin red, white and pink areas that jostle on the raw linen. Three white horizontal spray-painted lines across the head of the figure accentuate it and delete it at the same time, leaving the viewer with a satisfying mystery of source and style.

Caragh Thuring

Aggregate Man, 2015

Screen printing ink, oil and charcoal on linen

122 × 183 cm

Handelaar, 2008

Oil on linen

244 × 183 cm

Philip Guston

b. 1913, Montreal, Canada. d. 1980, Woodstock, New York, USA

Today, Philip Guston is recognised as one of the most important post-war artists. His cartoonish, seemingly crude, and hugely influential later paintings reflected his disquiet at the state of American society. With a healthy dose of self-parody, he deflated the aura of the heroic male artist and transformed objects and symbols, both mundane and shocking, into compositions with lasting power and mystery. *Rock* shows a mound rising from a sea-like horizon. Comprising heads, lidded eyes, limbs and heavy boot-soles painted in dark brick reds and browns, the form feels impenetrable. But, rather than solidity, the absurdity of the assembled object, staring and mute, suggests vulnerability and doubt.

Philip Guston

Rock, 1978

Oil on canvas

136.5 × 157.4 cm

Anna Glantz

b. 1989, USA

Lives and works in Los Angeles, USA

Varied in style, composition and execution, Anna Glantz's paintings are linked by the way in which they blend autobiography and fiction. Domestic interiors, still lives, cats and the artist's partner have all been topics in her recent solo exhibitions. In *Imagined Pregnancy* Glantz anchors a self-portrait within the history of painting, specifically a setting and style that speak of the Italian Renaissance. Imagining her own possible future pregnancy, the artist is incising a mark in time. The intense searching expression she wears as she gazes back at the viewer feels apt for a work that will shift in meaning and significance as the artist's life unfurls.

Anna Glantz

Imagined Pregnancy, 2020

Oil on canvas

203.2 × 162.6 cm

Issy Wood

b. 1993, USA

Lives and works in London, UK

Issy Wood's paintings combine elements of the past and the present to create pictures that are familiar yet startling. Blurring the boundaries between different worlds, Wood uses pictures from her phone, objects from auction catalogues, the faces of celebrities, images from advertising, fragments of architecture and motifs drawn from surrealism. Wood also publishes her writing and releases pop music: her work is preoccupied with slippages of language and meaning. In addition to canvas and linen, Wood also uses velvet as her support – skin, teeth, silverware, hair and leather glisten against its texture, but are far from straightforwardly alluring. The painting *Will he* features a nude, perhaps transposed from an old master painting, framed and overlaid by a Gothic arch. The figure, her face obscured, seems both partially trapped by the delicate white tracery and resolutely at one with the stone that grows around her.

Issy Wood

IW high gloss, 2017

Oil on velvet

50.5 × 40.5 cm

This Should Cover It, 2017

Oil on canvas

224.5 × 130 cm

Will he, 2019

Oil on linen

225 × 150 cm

Henry Taylor

b. 1958, USA

Lives and works in Los Angeles, USA

Henry Taylor paints representations of reality but rejects the label of portraitist. His pictures of people map an American cultural landscape that he is part of and witnesses first-hand but, rather than being documents, the paintings remain enigmatic, empathetic and open-ended. Taylor's subjects, which range from members of the Black community to symbolic objects that represent historical struggle, come from a combination of memory and archival images gathered on studio walls. The breadth and nuance of the human condition are perhaps his primary topics. In the painting *Clean* a slender woman stands in an off-white ground in which the painting title has been written. The brush marks are loose and confident, lending the work an urgent feeling, partly abstracting the figure, or at least obscuring their facial features. Feelings of assertive confidence coexist with an impression of vulnerability, giving the painting an emotional charge.

Henry Taylor

Untitled (Stripper), 2005

Acrylic on canvas

198 × 173 cm

Clean, 2006

Mixed media on linen

195.6 × 120.7 cm

Kate Lyddon

b. 1979, UK

Lives and works in London, UK

Working across painting, drawing and sculpture, Kate Lyddon creates scenes of bodily absurdity and dark humour. A cast of characters, sometimes cartoon-like and often grotesque, enact a variety of nonsensical actions and poses. Resisting stability or repetition, Lyddon allows chance to play an active role in determining the direction in which her imagery grows. *Cloakroom Exchange* originated in a joke between the artist and a friend when queuing outside an art fair. Realising he had nothing to check in to the cloakroom, he suggested he might check in his belly instead. Running with this visual idea, Lyddon painted a fleshy part of the body hanging over a structural support. As she developed the work the body changed from male to female, shifting the theme to the effects of pregnancy and ageing. In balancing the composition, the head of the character became tree-like – a motif Lyddon often utilises. It acts to pull her contemporary and autobiographical starting points in the direction of the fantastic, but brutal, realm of folk tales.

Kate Lyddon

Man Up, 2013

Oil, acrylic and collage on canvas

180 × 130 cm

Cloakroom Exchange, 2016

Oil on canvas

101 × 76 cm

Maria Lassnig

b. 1919, Kappel am Krappfeld, Austria. d. 2014,
Vienna, Austria

Maria Lassnig repeatedly used her own image as the focus of her work, depicting its changes over time against stark white grounds, seemingly free of context. Narrative associations play a central role in her work, however: *Froschkoenigin (Frog Princess)* references an old Russian or Eastern European fairy tale about three princes who are set challenges to identify their rightful brides. A magical frog helps one prince to complete all his challenges, but he remains ashamed of the creature – until, that is, it transforms into a beautiful young woman. Lassnig's painting features a luminous, but aged, female protagonist whose face is pensive and mask-like. A frog sits on her knee, attentively poised. Is the human figure in the painting the person who cast the spell to create the animal bride? Or perhaps it is the bride herself, looking back at events from the past.

Maria Lassnig

Froschkoenigin (Frog Princess), 2000

Oil on canvas

125 × 100 cm

Mezzanine

Robin F. Williams

b. 1984, USA

Lives and works in Brooklyn, USA

Robin F. Williams paints stylised, almost architectural figures that fill her canvases: her work questions why images of women have consistently been so problematic across visual culture. Williams' cast of characters includes supernatural entities such as ghosts, trolls and angels, and more earthly beings, such as sunbathers and joggers. Exaggerated facial expressions that demand the attention of the viewer, such as grins and wide-eyed stares, recur in her paintings. In *Teenage Witch* the cat and girl form a charismatic double act, possessing an element of threat. Williams uses the imaginative space of painting to playfully explore the boundaries of normative behaviour.

Robin F. Williams

Teenage Witch, 2018

Acrylic and oil on canvas

127 × 178 cm

Jamian Juliano–Villani

b. 1987, USA

Lives and works in New York, USA

Jamian Juliano–Villani's work is assembled from a kaleidoscope of imagery selected from internet memes and archives, personal photographs, television and film stills, and fragments of historical artworks. This motley crew of material is collaged and reproduced via airbrush, unifying the disparate parts into highly idiosyncratic compositions full of deadpan humour. The resulting pictures, often reminiscent of frozen moments from a feverish dream, are direct, affecting, and shot through with the artist's personality. *Constructive Living* presents a downcast figure in heavy make-up, suggestive of 1970s glam rock, a British circus clown or Japanese Kabuki theatre. Despite the age of the protagonist, Juliano–Villani has talked of the piece as being connected to teenage angst and driving around late at night 'crying and chain-smoking'. As the figure reaches out to sort through a pile of CDs on a white sheet, studio light illuminates the darkness. Its lens-flare pattern is painted in a manner that reinforces the feeling of glimpsing a movie or TV set, and of life being like a performance in a melodrama.

Jamian Juliano–Villani

Constructive Living, 2019

Acrylic on canvas

127 × 188 cm

Jordan Kasey

b. 1985, USA

Lives and works in Brooklyn, USA

Jordan Kasey paints bodies in enclosed domestic spaces with close zoomed-in cropping, giving a feeling of intimacy – and perhaps claustrophobia. The characters occupy the majority of the scene and are painted in shades of dark grey and black, as if in deep shadow or made of polished stone. The figures are heavy objects, in both senses of the word – alive but burdened, and static and volumetric like statues. Kasey's wry suggestions of confinement and boredom feel highly topical, but they are in dialogue with the history of still life painting as much as with contemporary art. Cézanne's instruction in a letter from 1904 to 'deal with nature by means of the cylinder, the sphere, and the cone' seems particularly relevant to the way Kasey analyses and renders forms. In *Grapefruits* the breakfast citrus fruits are the focal point, glowing like orbs. The light they reflect shimmers on the surface of the figure looking down on them, chin in hand: thinking, wondering, waiting.

Jordan Kasey

The Fan, 2016

Oil on canvas

132.1 × 182.9 cm

Tired at Breakfast, 2016

Oil on canvas

155 × 165.4 cm

Grapefruits, 2018

Oil on canvas

143 × 183 cm

PUBLIC PROGRAMME

All events are FREE, booking recommended

Every Saturday, 4 pm

Taster Tour

Get a feel for the current exhibition with these short introductions, offering insights from a gallery team member.

30 October 2021, 2–5 pm

Families Create: Surreal Bodies

Rose Cronin will lead a workshop entitled Surreal Bodies inspired by *The Stand-Ins*.

13 November 2021, 4 pm

Curator Tour: Paul Luckraft

Join this introduction to ways of looking at the *The Stand-Ins* from the curator of the exhibition.

20 November 2021, 2–5 pm

Families Create: Anne Harlid

Anne Harlid will lead a workshop inspired by *The Stand-Ins*.

27 November 2021, 3–6 pm

Invites artist's presentation:

Robert Cervera Performance

Join the artist as he performs music with immaterial elements such as data, wind, etc. The performance will take place for 10 minutes every hour until closing time.

FREE ENTRY

Thursday to Sunday 12–6pm

176 Prince of Wales Road

London NW5 3PT

zabludowiczcollection.com

**ZABLUDOWICZ
COLLECTION**