

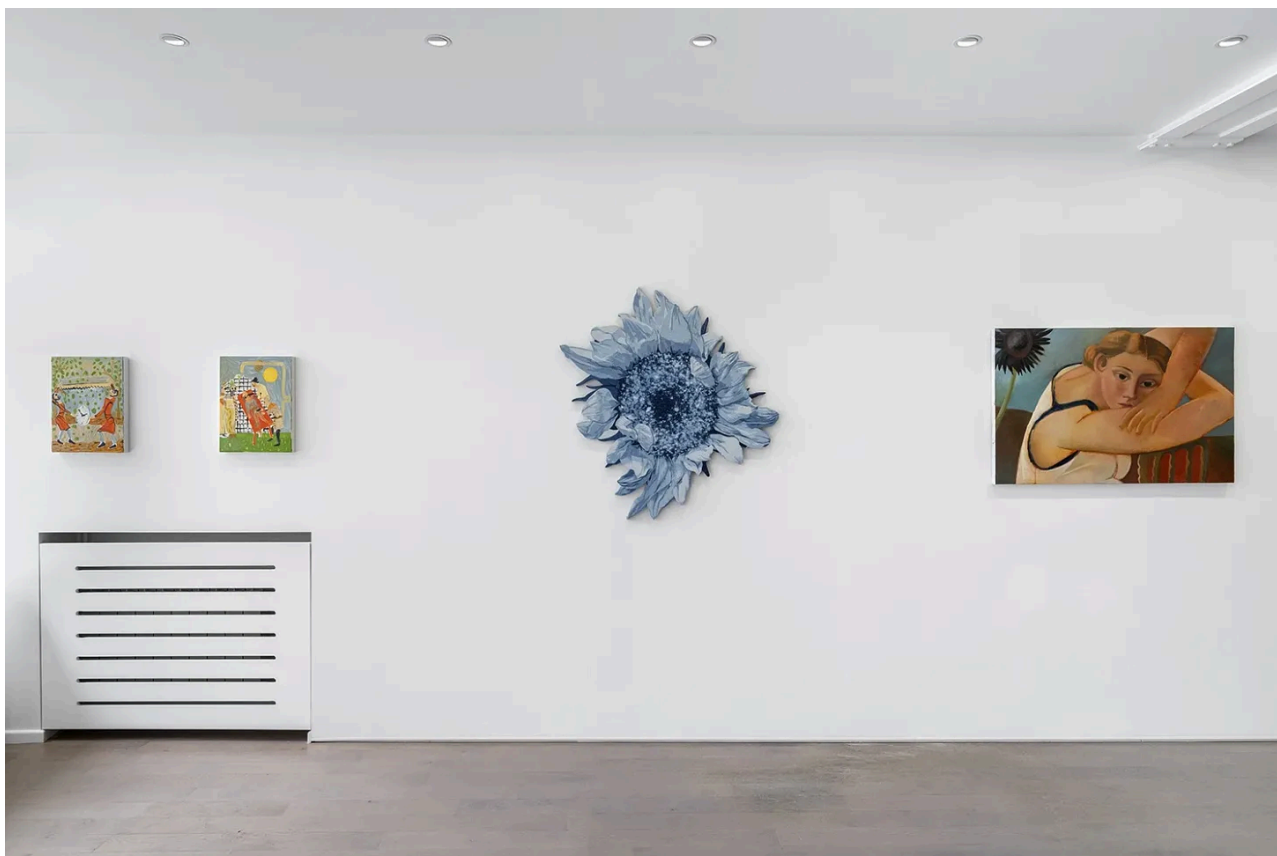
# Maybe That's the Point

Jamie Aylward reviews the two-part exhibition at Brigitte Mulholland

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Brigitte Mulholland, previously a senior director at Anton Kern Gallery in New York, has decided to open her eponymous gallery in Paris, finding prime real estate in the former storefront of a real estate agent on Rue de Turenne in the Marais.

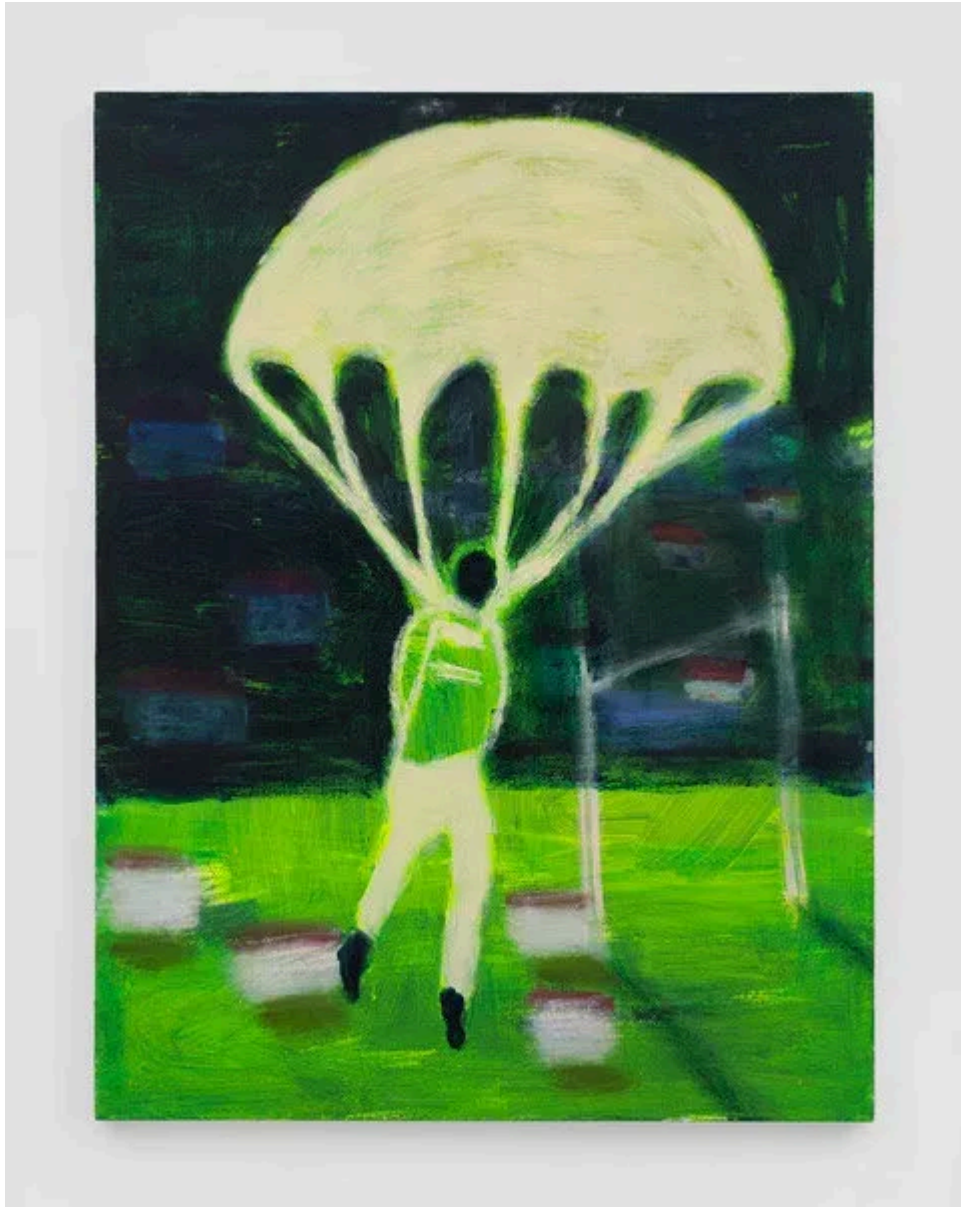
For a second, I thought there might be some symbolism in this. This is a part of Paris that saw its property values explode after the government decided to turn it from a working class neighbourhood into a museum district in the 1960s. So was it a subtle sign of reversal that a scrappy new gallery could replace a seller of expensive property in the 3rd arrondissement? I'm not sure. The real estate agent actually just moved a few streets over to Rue Réaumur, and the powerhouse galleries continue to reign all around Rue de Turenne — another JR show opened at Perrotin this month.

*Le vernissage, partie deux* (The Opening, Part Two) is the group show currently underway at the gallery, and it follows a first leg that ran from mid-April to June 1st. Mulholland has said she could have simply called these inaugural shows “Here’s shit I love” and indeed, among the 36 artists featured, there is work to love — Katherine Bradford, Sarah Dwyer, Alexandre Lenoir, Kevin Lowenthal, Florian Meisenberg, and others.

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The more than 50 works from the three dozen artists include photography, sculptures and other objects (like the slick glass and metal hangings of Niamh O'Malley), but this is predominantly a show of colourful and inviting painting, and one whose standout canvasses are such because their approachability pays off with an arresting inscrutability.

Two by Bradford in part one — *Favorite Seat* (2023) and *Parachute* (2023) — are wonderfully simple and strange. In the former, cotton candy colours depict a figure in odd repose in an abstract landscape. This and the pink sweep of the surface she sits on made me think of Vanessa Bell's *Studland Beach* (c.1912): significant form bringing you a scene of significant relaxation. In *Parachute*, a central figure in green is floating with the help of a sea creature-like parachute against a dark sky over neon green land. The figure's arms seem to disappear behind its back while its legs step forward in the air, as if on a pleasant Sunday stroll. But the parachute almost appears to be tangled around the person's neck, or perhaps tying its hands together. I think I've had dreams like this. The whole thing glows with a soft eeriness; night vision.



*Parachute* (2024)

Elsewhere, Alexandre Lenoir's *Retrouver ce qui est perdu* (2024) is messy and natural while Kevin Lowenthal's *Collective Mannequin* (2024) is ordered and synthetic, but both invite you in with a visible and satisfying surface texture. The French-Caribbean Lenoir's practice, which I think works best in his nature scenes, involves plastering paint on paint, masking with tape, and applying solvents and washes to arrive at festering yet verdant paintings. In *Retrouver* I see forest overgrowth contend with cement blocks at the edge of an unhealthy stream; in parts, green paint is even chipped to reveal a gray canvas. It's an explosive work but it stays true to life. With its accomplished deference to nature, it could stand alongside Théodore Rousseau's [work](#) currently over at the Petit Palais.

Lowenthal's texture derives from putting oil paint on cotton on linen canvases. When the paint dries over the fibers of this soft surface, it actually suggests the rough feel of a textured plaster wall. This visualized sensation contributes to the unsettling, Lynchian atmosphere of *Collective Mannequin* (2024), where a figure faces away from us towards a concrete window, while something like red smoke creeps up the left side wall, formless and in tension with the sharply defined shapes that otherwise comprise this gripping painting.

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Sarah Dwyer also paints on linen, minus the fibrous texture, plus a wider palette of pinks, blues, oranges and purples. The three paintings (and a ceramic) that she contributes here, particularly the abstracted, nebula-like nude *In the Light of Time* (2024), augur well for the solo show of her work that Mulholland will organise in the autumn. Elsewhere, Florian Meisenberg's small paintings *A Short History of Decay* (2024) and *F: Why did you come to us...* (2024) have an endearing classical folkiness to them, like if the monks doing illuminated manuscripts in the Middle Ages were drinking too much of the abbey beer for breakfast. On the other hand, his significantly larger painting *Thus Spoke Zarathustra* (2024) does not grab me — too uniformly coloured, too cartoonish.

Mulholland has suggested that vibrant painting is not always easy to find in Parisian galleries, and the advantage of this show is the great variety of it on display. The flip side of that, in a crowded group show, is that there are many works that are well executed and easy to look at, but don't hold one's attention. Sort of addressing this straight on, Danielle Orchard's *Black Sunflower* (2024) is more or less a copy after Matisse's *Les Yeux bleus* (1935), with the addition of the titular flower. It looks at you from the middle of the long left hand side wall of the gallery's main room, in the centre of the show. Orchard, who flies close to the sun of influence, once said that she takes inspiration from memories and that she doesn't distinguish between personal memories and memories of paintings she's seen. Here she has made a delicate and melancholic souvenir of *the* vibrant artist of the 20th century. But however long I look at it, I just think of other paintings. And maybe that's the point.

*Le vernissage, partie un* | 13 April - June 1 // *Le vernissage, partie deux* | 7 June - 12 July





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