

Kate Gottgens: The Blue of Distance

18 July - 13 September 2025



Future Past, 2025
Kate Gottgens

"We love to contemplate blue ... not because it advances to us, but because it draws us after it." – Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Huxley-Parlour are delighted to announce *The Blue of Distance*, a new exhibition of paintings by Kate Gottgens. Opening at our Swallow Street gallery in July, it is the South African artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery. In this new body of work Gottgens investigates nostalgia, journeying, and the expressive qualities of the colour blue.

The works in the exhibition continue the artist's depiction of suburban leisure: palm fronds cast long shadows on sundrenched backyards, friends rendered in varying degrees of detail walk along a sandy beach, and children pass an afternoon in a rowing boat. The exhibition title - *The Blue of Distance* - taken from Rebecca Solnit's book, *A Field Guide to Getting Lost*, is suggestive of a space between two points, fading perspective, and the movement across both. Caught between past and future, Gottgens explores the duality of loss and longing, her figures poised in a liminal realm between that which came before and that which they have yet to experience.

Operating within recognisable tropes - a man pictured on the deck of a ferry boat, a woman reclines on a chair, sunbathing in her back garden, a group of women looking out along a shoreline - the familiarity of Gottgens' subject matter is complicated by her painterly surface. This uncertainty and mutability manifests formally in her application of paint where defined mark-making imposes form against broad washes and gestural strokes. Figures and landscapes move in and out of focus, alluding to the spectral quality of the old photographs Gottgens uses as her source material. Her paintings exist at the slippages of the known and the unknown, we recognise their subjects but we do not know how they came to be there.

Gesturing to the fading of old film and the nostalgia inherent within photography, Gottgens draws influence from blue's broader cultural and spiritual associations. Drenched in inky, greyish and icy blues, *The Blue of Distance* evokes a melancholia and considers the notion, posited by writer Maggie Nelson in her book *Bluets*, of blue as the colour of memory. In Western art history blue is laden with symbolic significance, used on the frescoed ceilings of churches depicting the heavens and the robes of the Virgin Mary. There is a spirituality to Gottgens's paintings, in her evocatively rendered landscapes and in the introspection, the unknowability of her fleeting figures, and in where their journeys will take them.

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HUXLEY-PARLOUR

3-5 Swallow Street, London W1B 4DE

Opening Hours Monday to Friday, 10:00am - 5:30pm

Saturdays, 1:30pm - 5:30pm

Entry is free

More information can be found online at www.huxleyparlour.com