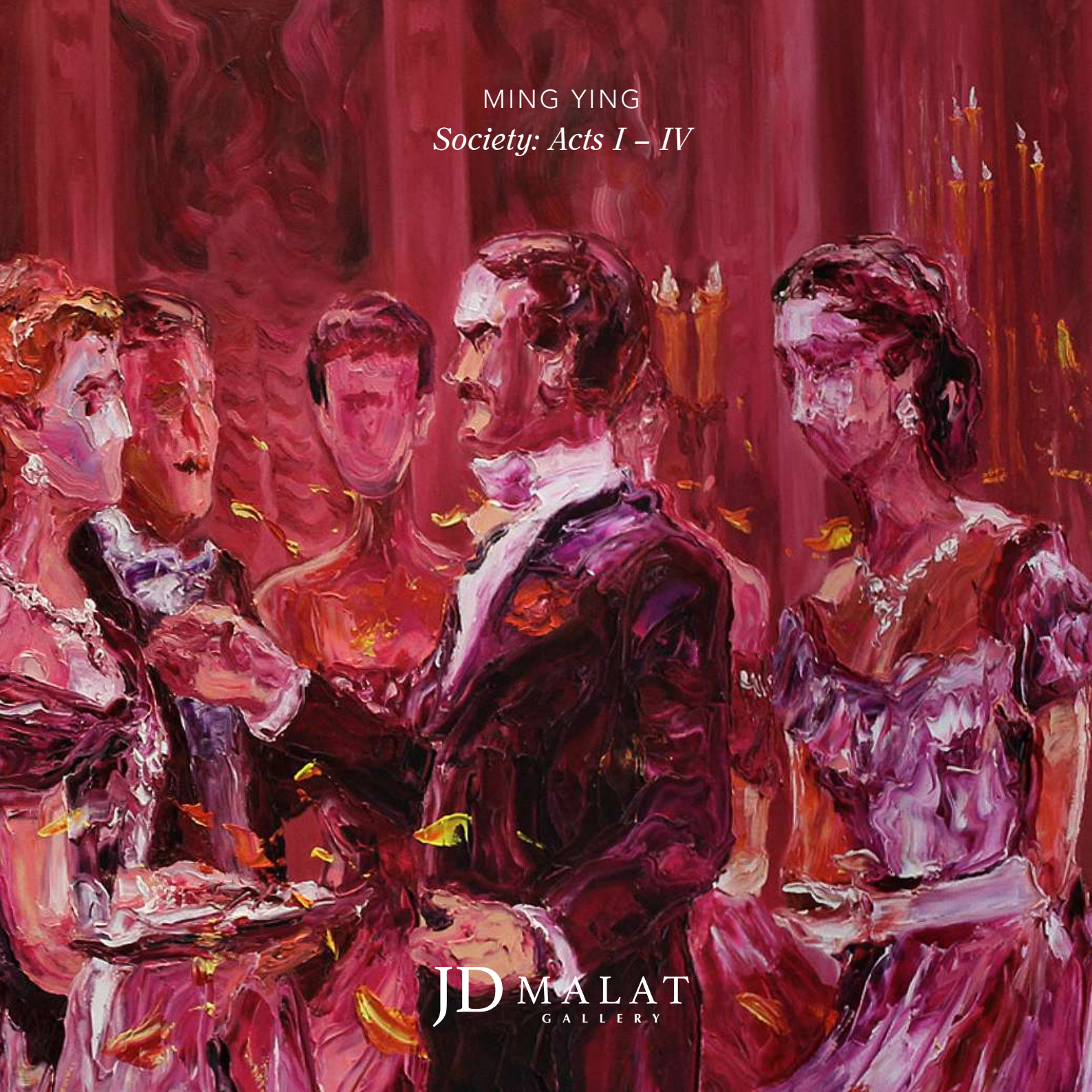


MING YING
Society: Acts I – IV



JD MALAT
GALLERY

11 May – 6 June 2022

MING YING
Society: Acts I – IV

JD MALAT
GALLERY



Ming Ying in her studio, 2022.

MING YING

Society: Acts I – IV

As a London-based artist who was born in Beijing, China, Ming Ying (b. 1995) reflects on the experiences of different races, cultures, and distinct social classes within new environments. Ming's paintings reference society's quotidian moments, flashy social scenes, drama and films to explore themes of loneliness and desire in an era where status and image are becoming increasingly important. *Society: Acts I – IV*, unveils Ming's exploration of feelings of alienation and marginalisation experienced by individuals who often find themselves distanced from their surroundings.

Society: Acts I – IV comprises twelve new oil paintings depicting an array of different social encounters and recreations where figures converse, play cards, pick flowers, dance, and dine within luxurious settings. While the settings are familiar to the viewer, Ming blurs the faces of her figures to reflect a loss of identity and homogeneity that people experience within vibrant and noisy settings. Ming states, 'loneliness and desire not only affect me, a London-based foreign artist, but also have a strong impact on people of different races, cultures, and distinct social classes'. Ming's exhibition displays the quotidian and memorable moments of her characters' lives which ultimately create an opportunity for viewers to resonate with the subjects in the paintings.

The curatorial premise of the exhibition takes inspiration from the structure of a theatre play. Presented in four 'acts', *Society: Acts I – IV* sets a stage through which the viewer can traverse Ming's fictional narratives that parallel with our contemporary day. Each 'act' explores the paradoxes between enjoyment and alienation in social environments. *Spotlight* sets the stage, so to speak, with the painting *Spotlight (1)*, depicting the arrival of a decadently dressed woman at a party, while *Spotlight (2)*, portrays spirited figures waltzing in a vivacious atmosphere.



Ming Ying in her studio, 2022.

As the viewer moves through the exhibition they will journey through the different facets of high society. Act 2: *Blessing* displays figures rejoicing in simple pleasures such as flower picking or indulging in candle-lit dinners within luxurious interiors. The dramatic twist of the plot unfolds in Act 3: *I heard from a little bird*, which unveils the discomfort one finds in an environment where people gossip. Act 4: *Circles* presents Ming's final take on the grandeur of high society's elite social circles. Large scale works such as *Circles (1)* and *Circles (2)* depict large groups of figures conversing around dining room tables, exchanging gifts and playing cards.

When studying her BA in painting at the Wimbledon College of Art, Ming joined extracurricular activities in theatre, exposing herself to plays such as *The Lady with the Camellias* (c.1852), *Wicked* (2003) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1909 – 1910). As such, Ming is naturally predisposed to a theatrical way of seeing, which is most evident in her colour palette of warm reds and pinks as well as cool shades of blue and green. Ming employs different colour ways to create an ambience that reflects the tension or happiness of each scene. The colours take on a symbolic meaning; they cast each figure in her painting in an atmospheric light, encouraging the viewer to consider the staged nature of social encounters.

The compositions in Ming's paintings are inspired by her day-to-day life as well as films and period dramas. Cafes, exhibition openings and parties provide Ming with quotidian fleeting moments, all of which are captured with brief sketches. Taking these sketches as a starting point, Ming later refers to period dramas such as *The Duchess* (2008), *The Crown* (2016 – 2021) and *Becoming Jane* (2007), to add elements of eighteenth and nineteenth-century dress and furniture. For example, *A little bird told me (2)*, depicts male figures wearing waistcoats and a seated woman adorned with an elaborate tall wig typical of the mid-to-late Georgian era. Classical motifs such as ornate mirrors, baroque chairs, and candle-lit dining tables are combined with elements that parallel with today such as the contemporary clothing seen in *Circles (3)*. When presented collectively, the paintings unveil a historic timeline of the human desire for luxury and the performative act of being part of a social circle. As a result, Ming deconstructs the barriers of history to highlight the cross-temporality and universality of alienation that such desires bring forth.

Ming's expressive style is inspired by the Buddhist philosophical idea of Impermanence, in which all conditioned existence is in a constant state of flux. Ming's style of painting is also partly inspired by the different artists she studied during her MA at the Royal College of Art. Ming credits Adrian Ghenie's dynamic strokes and semi-abstraction as one influence for her fiery atmospheres, while Felix Gonzalez Torres' installations impressed her deeply due to his focus on people's inner emotions, which aroused Ming to explore the expression of people's feelings in relation to their external surroundings.

Ming's flowing lines, shapes, and swirling brush strokes thus seek to reveal that all changes are conditional and interdependent in relation to our inner thoughts. As such, *Society: Acts I – IV* reminds the viewer of their act of performance in front of society and what it feels like to be affected by rapid change. Her work seeks to materialise the existence of marginalisation and alienation to question the notion of human existence and highlight how we can often find ourselves living in a stage-like setting within our contemporary society.

The dream-like settings in Ming's canvases blur the line between figuration and abstraction, and create a world that is parallel to, yet far from, reality. With her distorted brushstrokes, vibrant colour palette, and heavy impasto paint, Ming creates romantic and psychedelic scenes that are based on reality and imply a vision of desire. The anonymity of her subjects' indistinct faces contrast with their theatrical dress and lively environments to represent the complex tension between feelings of enjoyment and detachment. This complex contrast between familiarity and ambiguity is the core allure of Ming's paintings. While those who seldom frequent such places look at her work, they are left yearning to experience such decadences, highlighting the complex paradox of feeling the urge to be 'someone' and somewhere despite the sense of alienation and detachment that comes with experiencing the unfamiliar. The viewer is left questioning, who do we seek to be when in such environments? What is the human 'self', and how do we define it?



Spotlight (1), 2021

Oil on cotton
35 7/8 x 40 1/8 in
91 x 102 cm



Spotlight (2), 2021

Oil on cotton
35 7/8 x 48 1/8 in
91 x 122 cm



Spotlight (3), 2021

Oil on cotton
35 7/8 x 48 1/8 in
91 x 122 cm

Spotlight (4), 2022

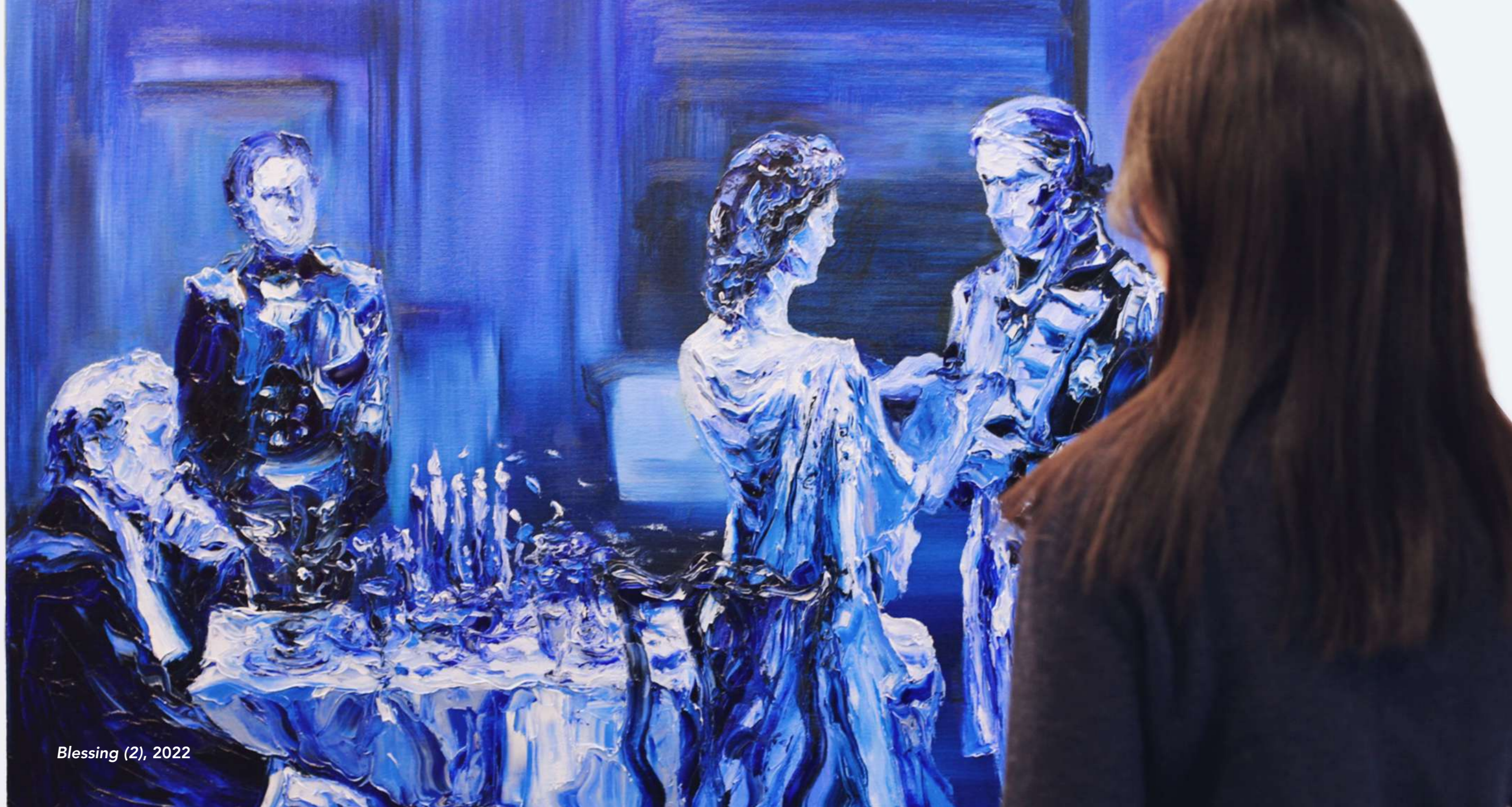
Oil on cotton
35 3/8 x 47 1/4 in
90 x 120 cm



Blessing (1), 2021

Oil on cotton
31 1/2 x 43 1/4 in
80 x 110 cm



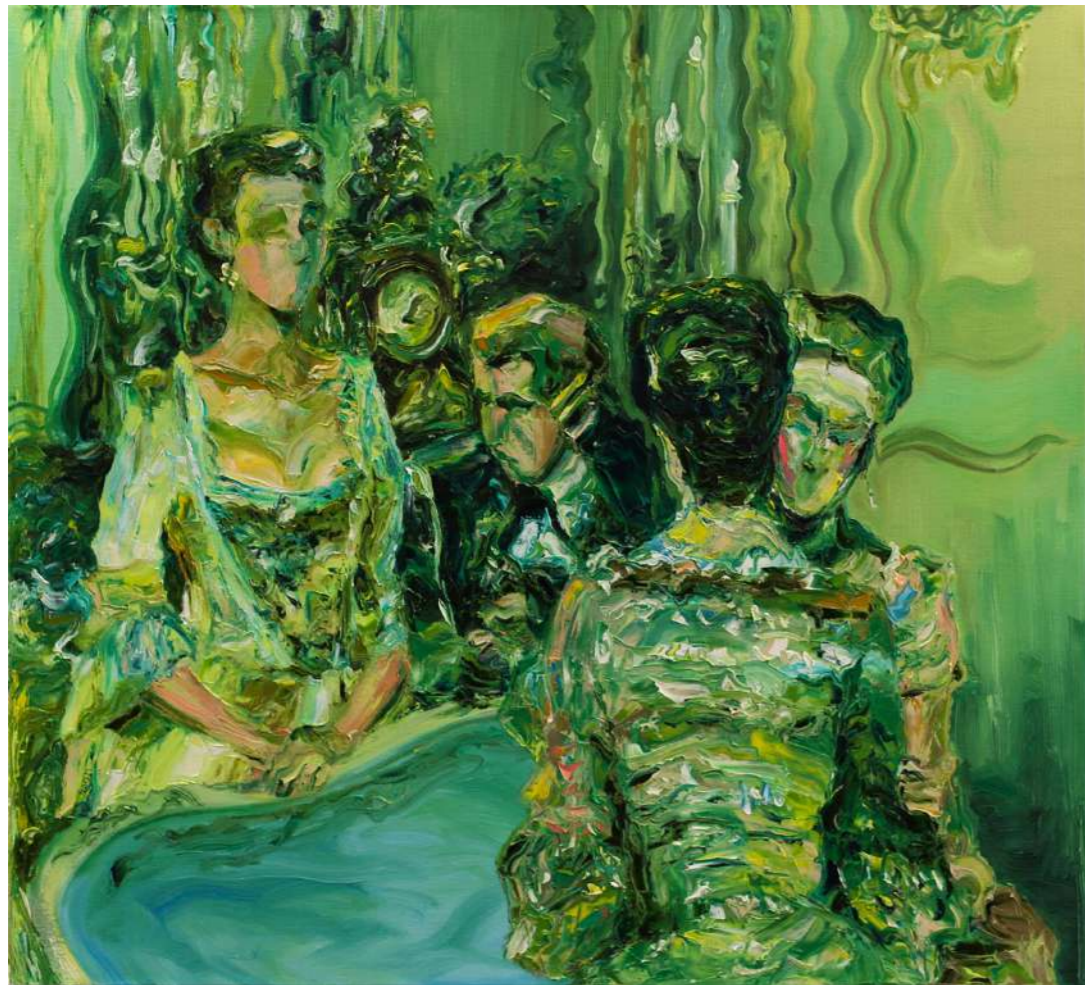


Blessing (2), 2022

Blessing (2), 2022

Oil on cotton
31 1/2 x 47 1/4 in
80 x 120 cm





A little bird told me (1), 2021

Oil on cotton
40 1/8 x 44 1/8 in
102 x 112 cm



A little bird told me (2), 2021

Oil on cotton
39 3/4 x 46 1/8 in
101 x 117 cm



A little bird told me (3), 2022

Oil on cotton
40 1/8 x 44 1/8 in
102 x 112 cm

Circles (1), 2022

Oil on cotton
43 1/4 x 59 1/8 in
110 x 150 cm



Circles (2), 2022

Oil on cotton
39 3/8 x 63 in
100 x 160 cm



Circles (3), 2022

Oil on cotton
37 3/4 x 50 in
96 x 127 cm





Ming Ying, in her studio 2022



This catalogue was produced by JD Malat Gallery
for the exhibition 'Society: Acts I – IV' by Ming Ying.

Text by Annie Pereira
Gallery Manager

info@jdmalat.com

30 Davies Street, London W1K 4NB
+ 44 203 746 68 30
www.jdmalat.com

Copyright © 2022 JD Malat Gallery

