



24-year old artist Emily Gillbanks transforms Mayfair gallery space into London Underground this March

Temporary Sitters, 16 March – 8 April 2023



Emily Gillbanks, *Temporary Sitters*, 2023, Oil on canvas, 78 3/4 x 63 in, 200 x 160 cm.

JD Malat Gallery is pleased to present *Temporary Sitters*, a debut solo exhibition by a 24-year-old British artist Emily Gillbanks. On view from 16 March 2023 until 8 April 2023, the show features a series of paintings that perpetuate the momentary snapshots of people travelling throughout the London Underground. Fascinated by the complex underground network, Gillbanks creates an installation that invites viewers to immerse themselves in the dynamic world of the tube and encounter fellow passengers, pondering each of the strangers' stories.

Recently graduated from Royal College of Art, Gillbanks hijacks the space with her rich representations of everyday life, putting the spotlight on the stories of people she comes across in her daily routine. In this particular show, Gillbanks aims to push the genre of new figurative painting further by playing with different levels of representation and exploring the concepts of alienation, anonymity and modern-day voyeurism in her practice. The diversity of passengers she encounters inspires her to re-imagine the tube settings into a unique public space that is in a constant state of transition, where each person riding the underground has no choice but to become a temporary sitter.



Given the recent unrest among the workforce in the United Kingdom, it comes as a surprise that public transport serves as the source of inspiration for Gillbanks. Strikes, increase of prices, cancellations of various services - Gillbanks encourages the audience to contemplate and celebrate this perplexing, yet somewhat enchanting environment by focusing on what the hybridity of London metropolis has to offer people. With technical rigour and a distinctive visual style, Gillbanks produces the kaleidoscopic diary of the to-be-continued London underground stories, immersing viewers into the ambiguous and charming ambience which is there to be explored.

Brimming with familiar underground iconography, the paintings circumvent the mundanity of everyday experiences to masterly portray the multifaceted public of all ages and backgrounds. Gillbanks, fascinated by enigmatic characters in the underground, sets a mission to unveil the dialogue between the ethics of visuality, everyday experiences, voyeurism and digital technologies. Discovering her subjects on various journeys across the train network in the characteristically modern S7 and S8 trains, Gillbanks features the typical attribute of these trains - the seats with multicoloured squares, which mark and signify a time in which the artist observed modern life.

In a bustling crowd, Gillbanks finds a plethora of personalities for her artworks, ranging from 'commuters who take up seats with their briefcases, backpacks, and laptops to tourists with all kinds of union jack-inspired paraphernalia'. The tube becomes a ubiquitous arena where individuals with various life paths intersect and a 10-minute journey suddenly unifies and equalises everybody. Despite the differences between the passengers, they are all connected as most of them are captivated by technology.

Responding directly to technological phenomena, Gillbanks' practice aims to reflect on how smartphones have become an extension of both the mind and the body. The artist takes this question further by asking the audience if they recall any of the faces they came across on the tube. She notes, 'Most Temporary Sitters do not hold enough significance for us to remember their faces. Most are strangers, with destinations unknown. Passers-by'. Absorbed into the virtual world of digital devices, people often forget about reality and life happening around them. Gillbanks also raises a topic of 'modern-day voyeurism', which encompasses CCTV monitoring as well as extends the act of watching each other through the world of social media and easily accessible digital surveillance.

Underpinned by relevance and idiosyncrasy, *Temporary Sitters* by Emily Gillbanks endeavours to underscore a universal notion of equality between individuals, providing a refreshing outlook on contemporary debates. Jean-David Malat, the founder of the gallery, remarks, "Looking at Emily's unique ability to transform the mundanity of everyday experiences in the underground into a refreshing platform which raises deeper sociological and anthropological questions, I am beyond thrilled to present her first show *Temporary Sitters* this March. We are delighted to be running two solo exhibitions simultaneously, so the audience will participate in the dialogue between Gillbanks' figurative social-realist works and expressive vibrant canvases by Andrew Litten".

For more information, images and comment, please contact: press@jdmalat.com

JD Malat Gallery, 30 Davies St, Mayfair, London, W1K 4NB
Opening hours: Monday – Friday: 10am – 6pm; Saturday: 12pm – 6pm