

DENNY DIMIN
GALLERY
NEW YORK

Stephen Thorpe
Boundaries of the Soul

March 4 - April 14, 2022

Denny Dimin Gallery is pleased to present the first solo exhibition in the United States by British artist Stephen Thorpe, who is known for his intricate paintings of architectural interiors that operate as reflections of the inner self. Thorpe's exhibition, *Boundaries of the Soul*, will feature a new body of work that further explores the boundaries of physical and psychological spaces through Western and non-Western symbolism, patterns and cultural iconography. The exhibition will be on view from March 4 to April 14, 2022, at the gallery's New York location.

For over a decade, Thorpe has developed a practice that has explored the pictorial possibilities of imagined interior space on a two-dimensional surface, citing artists of the early Northern Renaissance such as Jan Van Icke, Carlo Crivelli, and Robert Campin as artistic progenitors. Over the past few years, he has turned to the work of mythologist Joseph Campbell and psychoanalysts Karen Horney and Carl Jung to more acutely explore his painterly process and the symbolic imagery and patterns that manifest in his work.

In 2020, following the self-isolation brought on by the global pandemic, Thorpe debuted a new series of 'corner' paintings that offer an intimate and deceptively simplified conceptual framework. The corners are the meeting place of three flat planes, compositionally rendered to frame the inside and outside of a room. Representing both consciousness and unconsciousness, simultaneous sites of safety and entrapment, the corners are a metaphor for the dualities inherent to human nature.

The show's title "boundaries of the soul" references the interplay between consciousness and unconsciousness, the physical and spiritual – the very space that marks the critical point of awareness, here proffered through the paintings as an entry point to introspection. Thorpe refers to the psychoanalytical understandings of the soul as the "psyche" or the "unconscious," and champions daydreaming *vis-à-vis* painting as a key mode of exploring one's psychological confines.

Physical boundaries are also significant in Thorpe's painterly process and chosen subject matter. Lines are drawn and blurred through textures that are wet and dry, smooth and rough, controlled

and chaotic. The edge of the canvas – depicting a room – bleeds into the gallery through thick layers of paint molded to the work's frame – its own corner. Anachronistic objects question time and place, and ornate rugs, with designs drawn from a myriad of cultures, act as nostalgic calls to half-remembered sanctuaries, a tangle of real and self-constructed realities. Life-size arcades are personified yet switched off, inanimate objects; while the living birds of US naturalist and painter John James Audubon are the focus of lifeless, decorative wallpaper.

Through these new works and an exhibition design conceived by the artist, Thorpe creates a setting that marks the boundaries of the soul, a platform for in-betweenness, and spaces through which to encounter the limits and distinctions between self and environment.

About the artist

Stephen Thorpe paints interiors, where rooms are likened to the psychological interiors of the mind. Drawing on psychoanalysis, sociology, folklore, and the reality of myth, Thorpe's intricately composed paintings are at once representational and abstract, deliberately rendered to represent the dualities, synergies, and contradictions of relation between environment and human interiority. Such nuances are present in all aspects of the work – from his painterly process, with visceral and physical applications of paint paired with contemplative, controlled marks; to the chosen subject matter, encompassing busy patterns, half-familiar objects, and skewed perspectives juxtaposed with quiet, singular planes of color.

Thorpe's work offers a rich interplay of fragmented images, half-glimpsed through complex and often entangled emotions, thoughts, dreams, and memories, while appropriating various symbols, archetypes, cultural icons, patterns and textures. Through the indexing of graphic and physical modes of painting, his work offers up spaces of connection and disconnection to contemplate how we come to be in relation both to ourselves and others.

Stephen Thorpe is currently based in Atlanta, Georgia. He received his MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art in London and is currently a Professor of Painting at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). He has been the recipient of numerous prizes, including the Basil H. Alkazzi Foundation Scholarship; Saatchi's Showdown Prize, judged by Kristine Roepstorff and Matthias Weisher; prize winner of the 3rd Ward Open Call; and the Royal Scottish Academy's The Skinny Award. Thorpe's work is held in prominent private and museum collections and has been featured in solo and group exhibitions around the world at venues including Ora-Ora Gallery, Hong Kong; Denny Dimin Gallery, New York and Hong Kong; Saatchi Gallery, London; the National Museum, Gdansk, Poland; Copeland Gallery, London; Summerhall, Edinburgh; the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh; and Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen, amongst others. He previously sat on the Selection Committee for the Basil H. Alkazzi Scholarship Award and the Ali H. Alkazzi Scholarship at the Royal College of Art, as well as the Outstanding Student Award in Hong Kong.