

If you speak for the Wolf, speak
against him as well

Michael Greaves
August 2024

Michael Greaves: *If you speak for the Wolf, speak against him as well.*

Olga Gallery Dunedin August 23- September 12 2024

"I have been thinking a lot lately about relationships, on, of and in between things.."

Michael Greaves states this casually when probed about the intention and explanation of his most recent collection of paintings exhibited at Olga Gallery in Dunedin, New Zealand (August 23-September 12, 2024). This response is not unexpected from the painter, who for much of his career has shifted modes, explored multiple painterly outcomes, and will often delve into definitions of his practice that sit more in an idea of meta painting.

To put this into context, painting today communicates in ways that adopts and co-opts historical motif and trope, reusing and utilising symbolic references to disrupt the iconographic programmes that have served paintings dominance as a meaning carrier in the premodern years. It is here where this body of work sits, drawing on traditional modes of making, embedded in the landscape genre, a sublime coastline, a kind of beauty that acts as a stage support for a selected collection of objects and spheres, suspended but in focus, disruptive in their playfulness, seriously proposing an ambiguity and unpredictability of meaning.

These spheres, lit dramatically from a same or similar light source could be read as a stand in for people, hermetically sealed, sometimes unformed or becoming, close, almost touching but never merging. The eternal existential question of belonging, or aloneness in this world are rendered with Greaves' intuitive modulations of bronzes, greens and matte fawn like colours. *Semi* a work consisting of two such floating spheres, one bronze/yellow atop a cadmium red/orange push hard towards the front of the painting mimic a colon, a punctuation mark in language, typically used to introduce a sentence that clarifies, explains, or elaborates on the sentence that came before it. A semicolon, on the other hand, is typically used to simply connect two related sentences of equal importance. The tile becomes both descriptive and elusive, proposing a connection, a relation, but also planting a seed of an expanded interpretation.

Titling has always been a consideration for Greaves, in the individual painting titles and in the collective show titles. Recent shows such as *we are not strong enough for rivers and stars* (Melanie Rodger Gallery. Auckland, New Zealand, February 2023) and *Sullivan's Objects* (Five Walls. Melbourne, Australia, November 2022), or the last exhibition here at Olga, also in 2022 *The Promise and the Fall*, all allude to how the show is to be interpreted and read as a whole. Here is no different. *When you speak for the Wolf, speak against him as well* hints at the duality inherent in any act of depiction, acknowledging the subjective nature of interpretation. These paintings are not intended to convey a pre-determined, fully formed idea to a passive, detached viewer. Rather this new work, a mature and resolved collection, delivers an allegory in a non-literal sense and a proposal of a meditative pause, a moment of repose to contemplate the weight and balance of a oneness and singularity of life.

This body of work marks a new and exciting turn in the painter's career.



If you speak for the Wolf, speak against him as well.
Acrylic and oil on canvas. 1006x1290mm. 2024



Salve.
Oil on canvas. 453x490mm. 2024



Credo. Acrylic and oil on
canvas. 453x490mm. 2024



An Internal Dialogue. Acrylic and
oil on canvas. 385x490mm. 2024



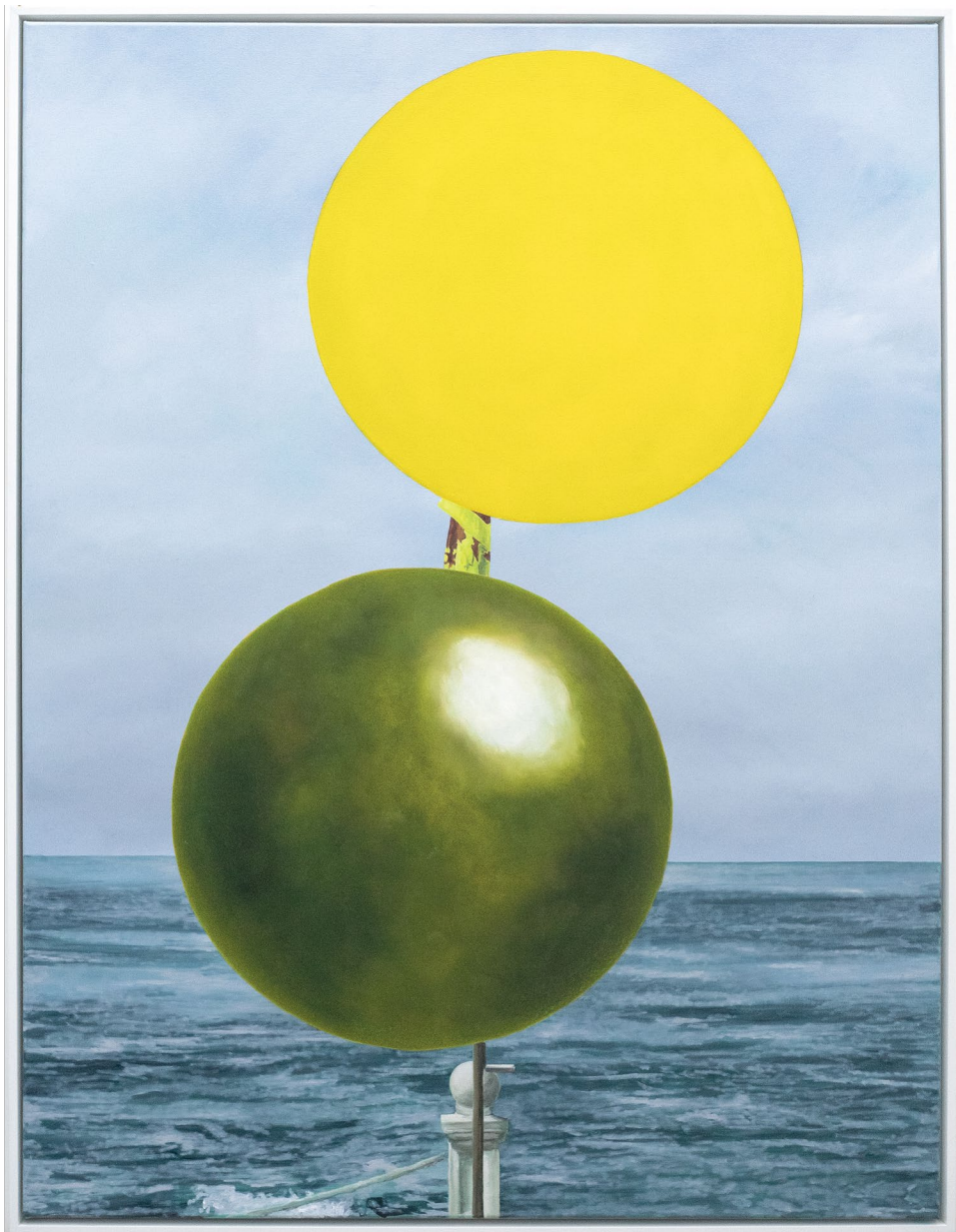
Semi. Acrylic and oil on
canvas. 410x540mm. 2024



The Grey. Acrylic and oil on
canvas. 690x795mm. 2024



Second Study for a Monument. Acrylic
and oil on canvas. 355x410mm. 2024



The Moment, and Attraction. Acrylic
and oil on canvas. 1006x1290mm. 2024

END

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