

United in their cropped views, androgynous figures and eerie lighting, Jordan Kasey's new paintings reach for a sense of unhomeliness, in the Heideggerian sense that we are strangers to our own being. They present a struggle between the removed and the experienced, the alienated and the certain, that plays out in the formal realm of competing textures and colours.

In *Practicing Piano* (all works 2017), a sense of *horror vacui* reigns as a haunting human spectre hunches over ivory and charcoal keys. The piano's glossy red lacquer reflects apparitions of serpentine fingers, which only serve to heighten the figure's phantasmic presence. The composition is tight, purposefully leaving viewers without space and without context. Who is this yellow-eyed entity with mauve lips who crowds our own space with such empty presence? Greyscale skin, softly swirling with Kasey's deft brushstrokes, lures us into what should be a familiar scene of leisure and song. But the gaze of a lone yellow eye, the way the

impasto jeans meet the rendered keys at an acute angle and the stark shadows all usher us into the uncanny.

Kasey's paintings often avoid fully fleshed-out faces. *Upside Down Face* manages to demonstrate virtuosic paint handling while communicating only basic visual information. What little there is on this canvas – soft, sickle-cell lips; a scalene nose; Play-Doh eyebrows – accumulates into an inverted portrait of no one. Multiple lighting sources collide, leaving a deep shadow on the far side of the nose, cut with a feathered highlight. Shades of salmon, lemon and steel radiate on the face, which is sectioned into discrete thirds. Coupled with intense cropping that allows only centimetres of background colour to peek through at the corner, *Upside Down Face* is irresistible in its visual absorption.

There are two scenes of summertime leisure in Kasey's show, *Backyard at Night* and *Poolside*. In the former, a grisaille figure (stylised and stocky) lounges in bathing trunks while

fingering a blade of emerald grass. Tightly rendered, the figure's left arm cuts down the centre of the canvas and is painted in a style corresponding to a chair in the composition's bottom-right corner. Likewise, the figure's more painterly right arm matches another chair in the back left. Kasey's style of many styles produces an uncanny visual logic that encourages a sense of unease. No stability lurks within this painting that could placate uncertainties about Kasey's environments. More upbeat than the brooding noir of *Backyard at Night*, *Poolside* shows a greater degree of stylistic uniformity, except for the thick, confettied bathing suit of one of Kasey's four bathers, all of whose faces are either turned away from us or cropped out. We are left wondering: who are these people and what do they really look like? What world is this that is almost, but so clearly not, our own? Kasey updates unhomeliness for the present, when we are strangers to our own being as much as each other's. *Owen Duffy*



*Poolside*, 2017, oil on canvas, 197 × 274 cm.

Courtesy the artist and Nicelle Beauchene Gallery, New York