

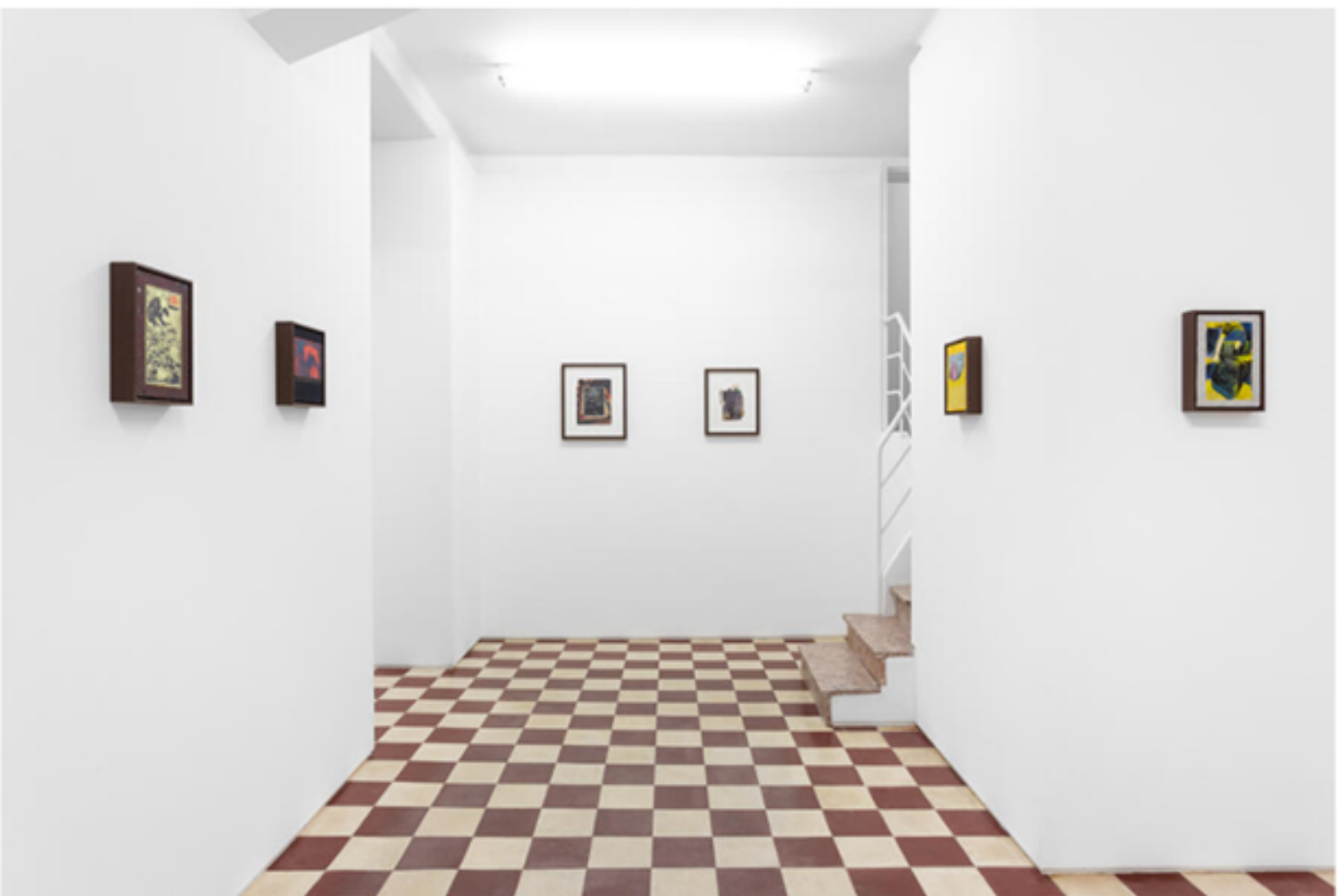


Judging Ian Tweedy by his Book Covers

At MONITOR, Lisbon, the artist's series of experimental paintings mix historic events, current affairs and personal memories



Placed uniformly at eye level along the walls of the two rooms at MONITOR Lisbon, Ian Tweedy's dark, contained paintings appear as a series of small crepuscular pits with flares of colour. Closer to, partial subjects – a human form, a piece of landscape, fabric or tarpaulin – become a little clearer. Some of the works in 'Wait in Line' are photographs on which oil paint has been applied, but mostly they are book covers to which Tweedy has added patches of colour using a traditional technique of layering and glazing. The artist apparently prefers printed over digital images as source material, and has been collecting many different kinds for years, consciously using and being inspired by their torn edges and fragility.



Ian Tweedy, 'Wait in Line', 2021, exhibition view, MONITOR, Lisbon. Courtesy: the artist and MONITOR, Rome/Lisbon/Pereto; photograph: Bruno Lopes

Tweedy – an American artist who was born on a military base in Germany in 1982, educated in schools across Europe, studied at NABA in Italy and now lives in New York – has been using books as canvases since 2003. His work mixes both collective and individual imagery, so references to climate change or the refugee crisis, for example, are processed alongside memories from his peripatetic past. In *My Landscape* (2021), a mainly black-and-white drawing in oil on a book cover, the artist depicts himself crouched on the floor of his studio, sorting out his archives of printed material and tools. The edges of the work reveal Tweedy's various attempts at forming images (we can see yellows and blues, and other marks), as he leaves traces of his multiple efforts in lieu of an additional frame inside the limits of the original book cover. In *Blue Tarp* (2021), the torsos of two people whose

heads are covered by fabric emerge from a slab of yellow paint. This work was inspired by an image of refugees who stood in front of a tent and didn't want their faces to be recognised – and is one of the many drape studies on show. The others are *Hide* (2021), in which clothes have been arranged in a makeshift shelter, and *Burnt Blue Bush* (2021), in which a blue tarpaulin hangs behind a bush whose pictorial depth is the result of the artist having applied countless layers of oil. Through a variety of additions, Tweedy's obstinate mark-making builds up images in an experimental process, one in which references to history, personal and current affairs settle together into a complex, sedimentary whole.



Ian Tweedy, *My Landscape*, 2021, oil on book cover, 28 × 20 cm. Courtesy: the artist and MONITOR, Rome/Lisbon/Pereto; photograph: Bruno Lopes

Of colours, Tweedy says that he recently overcame his fear that they would overwhelm concept and imagery, and now understands them as the glue that binds all of his compositions together. There are clues that his works feature interlaced accounts of things that have either happened to him or somewhere in the world beyond, yet picking out one thread is nearly impossible, as if Tweedy's narratives were treated in the same fragmented value as colours and materials. But, as in music, some elements repeat themselves here, including references to some of the places the artist has visited on his travels. A piece of the Berlin Wall appears in the background of *German Graffiti* (2021); Milanese architecture is paired with a close-up of tree bark in *Angels Skeleton* (2021) (one of the few works in this exhibition that combine pencil on paper and photography); and an oil flare burns at a distance against the hot summer skies of Utah in *Ochre Flame* (2020).

Drawing strength from his powerful oil superimpositions, Tweedy attempts to mark surfaces with the passing of time. Each of his carefully made oil paintings appear to bring up disparate stories from the depths, destabilising them as they do so, and hint at a global yet diffused subconscious.

Ian Tweedy, 'Wait in Line' is on view at MONITOR, Lisbon, until 22 January 2022

Main image: Ian Tweedy, Run (detail), 2021, oil on book cover, 24 × 23 cm. Courtesy: the artist and MONITOR, Rome/Lisbon/Pereto; photograph: Bruno Lopes. Thumb: Ian Tweedy, Blue Tarp (detail), 2021, oil on book cover, 25 × 21 cm. Courtesy: the artist and MONITOR, Rome/Lisbon/Pereto; photograph: Bruno Lopes