

Press Release

Angel Otero. Agua Salada

Hauser & Wirth Somerset

2 May – 18 October 2026

Press Preview & Artist Lunch: Friday 1 May 2026, 11 am – 3 pm



Angel Otero makes his UK debut this spring, featuring a deeply personal body of work completed during an artist residency at Hauser & Wirth Somerset. Known for his physically immersive approach to paint as material, Otero transforms the medium itself—scraping, layering and peeling dried oil paint to create richly textured compositions that hover between abstraction and figuration. Moving his studio practice from Brooklyn NY and Puerto Rico temporarily to Somerset, the residency provides Otero with the opportunity to continue his exploration of memory, place and meaning in the context of a new environment.

‘I have come to understand place as a living presence within the work—not merely a backdrop, but a condition that shapes perception. Every environment holds a quiet residue of light, architecture, weather, and history. When I shift my surroundings, it stirs fragments of memory that surface through process rather than depiction. The work becomes a meeting point between where I am and where I have been. The studio becomes porous, and what lies beyond inevitably seeps into the painting.’

– Angel Otero

The exhibition unfolds across the galleries at Hauser & Wirth Somerset, with outdoor sculpture extending into the inner cloister courtyard. Paintings range from monumental compositions, including Otero’s largest figurative painting to date, that envelop the viewer in a fully immersive sensory experience to intimate encounters with smaller studies and works on paper, rarely presented outside the studio.

The exhibition title ‘Agua Salada’ (Salt Water) operates on several simultaneous registers. First, it is the ocean: a horizon of origin, migration, and return. Second, it is chemistry: salt dissolving into water, a visible and invisible transformation that both erases and preserves. Third, it is affect: salt as sting and as salve. Salt Water in this body of work is never a single metaphor, it is a process, a material, and a conceptual stance. The series asks viewers to reckon with how place and family leave mineral traces on us, how grievance can calcify into identity, and how nostalgia can be both balm and burden. The work does not resolve these tensions; it lets them crystallize, shimmer, and slowly dissolve.

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Otero's signature mode of storytelling evokes the ways in which household objects become personified through the lens of memory. These objects, seemingly quotidian at first glance, take on the role of surrogates for family members and moments from the artist's past. Expansive landscape works feature familiar motifs of doors, bedframes, pianos and clocks that operate as portals. Each work becomes an accumulation of intimate fragments, a composite self-assembled from elements that are never singular or fixed.



Early explorations in portraiture include a painting depicting Otero as a small child with his grandmother. The figures tenderly hold on to one another whilst merging and colliding with a wave, serving as an emotional anchor for the exhibition. The sea is a subject the artist frequently returns to, embodying both beauty and terror, its unpredictability and vastness reflecting the instability of memory itself. Photograph-sized family portraits appear collaged within the works, hovering at the edge of recognition, pointing to the tie we have with photographs as tangible objects and powerful emotional bridges to our past.

The outdoor work, 'Dreams and Salt' (2026), was first shown in Puerto Rico as part of La Gran Bienal Tropical in 2025, highlighting a feeling of distance and longing to return to the island. A new film conceived in Puerto Rico brings elements investigated within the paintings into moving image for the first time. The non-linear narrative includes footage shot within Otero's late grandmother's home, sealed since her passing and preserved as a container of the family's shared history. An unmediated record of life that simultaneously speaks to the stories we hold close and how we understand ourselves in relation to a person and the resonance of a space.

Notes to Editors

Hauser & Wirth Learning

'Education Lab: Echoes' accompanies Angel Otero's exhibition and has been developed in collaboration with our youth collective, Arthaus, and Museum To You, a Somerset-based charity supporting older adults in care settings. Inspired by Otero's reflections on people, place and personal fragments, the project will evolve over the course of the exhibition through the gathering of community stories, short films, soundscapes and a collaborative memory wall. Conceived as a shared community archive and a multigenerational platform for dialogue, the Education Lab brings local voices into conversation with international participants through a global digital open call. An active Learning program will take place throughout the season, engaging schools, universities and community partners.

About the artist

Angel Otero was born in 1981 in Santurce, Puerto Rico, where he resided until moving in 2004 to obtain his BFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. In 2009, Otero was included in the exhibition 'Constellations' at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, shortly after receiving his MFA. He currently splits his time between New York and Puerto Rico. Otero was the subject of major solo exhibitions in 2016 at the Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, and in 2017 at The Bronx Museum of the Arts, NY.

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Otero's process remains one of construction and deconstruction: building up surfaces of oil paint on glass, allowing them to partially dry, then carefully peeling the fragile 'skins' that he repositions onto canvas. This method embraces unpredictability, welcoming chance into the final composition and allowing for continual shifts and transformations. Each work becomes a palimpsest of gesture, colour, and duration, carrying its own history on its surface where traces of previous marks bleed through. In this way, Otero brings process and intention into alignment: through the careful layering and interweaving of fragments from disparate sources, he evokes the way memory, imprecise and often distorted, is continually reconstructed and collapsing into our present.

Otero's work is in numerous public and private collections including The Bronx Museum of the Arts, Bronx NY; Istanbul Modern, Istanbul, Turkey; Kemper Museum of Contemporary Art, Kansas City MO; Long Museum, Shanghai, China; Moderna Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; Museo de Arte Contemporáneo de Puerto Rico; Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago IL; North Carolina Museum of Art, Raleigh NC; Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York NY; Speed Art Museum, Louisville KY; Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, Richmond VA; and the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York NY.

Hauser & Wirth Publishers



Angel Otero

Global Release, September 2026

Exclusive Release at Hauser & Wirth Somerset, July 2026

Hardcover

28 x 24 cm

£45.00 / \$50.00 / €48.00

Delve deeper into Angel Otero's artistic practice in this new publication examining recent developments and documentation from his Brooklyn and Puerto Rico studios. Alongside essays by Tobias Ostrander (Curator, Latin American Art, Tate, London, UK) and John Tain (Director of Curatorial Affairs, Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh, US), a conversation between Otero and Julie Rodrigues Widholm (Director, UC Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley, US) explores the artist's singular practice in his own words, while extensive studio photography documents his labour-intensive process and evolution of many of the works on view this summer.

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Hauser & Wirth Somerset

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Gallery opening hours:
Wednesday – Sunday
12 – 5 pm

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Studio portrait of Angel Otero, Puerto Rico, 2026
Photo: Javier Romero
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Detail of work in progress by Angel Otero, 2026
Photo: Javier Romero
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth

Studio portrait of Angel Otero, Brooklyn, 2026
Photo: Javier Romero
Courtesy the artist and Hauser & Wirth