

# **PAINTER, PAINTER**

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## ABSTRACT

In *Painter, Painter*, Elle Chae explores the *home* as an unstable, unpredictable environment that is highly sensitive to the traces emanating from the domestic space, including its inhabitants. This body of work examines how the occupant's interactions can blur the notion of *home* as a shelter. Using the creative deconstruction as a mode of generating new meanings, Chae's conceptual juxtaposition and wide range of techniques and surface create reverie scenes that are open to and encourage freedom of interpretations.

## INSTALLATION IMAGES



1. *Painter, Painter*, installation view (1), Karsh Masson Gallery, Ottawa, 2016



2. *PAINTER, PAINTER*, installation view (2), Karsh Masson Gallery, Ottawa, 2016



3. *PAINTER, PAINTER*, installation view (3), Karsh Masson Gallery, Ottawa, 2016



4. *PAINTER, PAINTER*, installation view (4), Karsh Masson Gallery, Ottawa, 2016



5. *PAINTER, PAINTER*, installation view (5), Karsh Masson Gallery, Ottawa, 2016

INDIVIDUAL WORKS



6. *HIDE AND SEEK*, 2016, acrylic and oil on wood, 61cm x 51cm



7. *TABLE FOR TWO*, 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 91.4cm x 76.2cm



8. *ALL MY POSSESSIONS INSIDE (2)*, 2016, acrylic and oil on wood, 152 cm x 122cm



9. *ALL MY POSSESSIONS INSIDE* (2), detail



10. *ROOM WITH VIEW*, 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 157.5cm x 132.08cm



11. *ROOM WITH VIEW*, detail



12. *DOOR WAY TO THE CHAIR*, 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 102cm x 76cm



13. *WHAT HAPPENS HERE STAYS HERE II* , 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 41cm x 61cm



14. *IMITATION*, 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 132.08cm x 167.64cm



15. *MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME*, 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 30.5cm x 40.6cm

## IMAGE LIST

1. *Painter, Painter*, installation view (1), Karsh Masson Gallery, Ottawa, 2016
2. *Painter, Painter*, installation view (2), Karsh Masson Gallery, Ottawa, 2016
3. *Painter, Painter*, installation view (3), Karsh Masson Gallery, Ottawa, 2016
4. *Painter, Painter*, installation view (4), Karsh Masson Gallery, Ottawa, 2016
5. *Painter, Painter*, installation view (5), Karsh Masson Gallery, Ottawa, 2016
6. *Hide and Seek*, 2016, acrylic and oil on wood, 61cm x 51cm
7. *Table for Two*, 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 91.4cm x 76.2cm
8. *All My Possessions Inside* (2), 2016, acrylic and oil on wood, 152 cm x 122cm
9. *All My Possessions Inside* (2), detail
10. *Room with View*, 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 157.5cm x 132.08cm
11. *Room with View*, detail
12. *Door Way to the Chair*, 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 102cm x 76cm
13. *What Happens Here Stays Here II* , 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 41cm x 61cm
14. *Imitation*, 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 132.08cm x 167.64cm
15. *Make Yourself at Home*, 2016, acrylic and oil on canvas, 30.5cm x 40.6cm

## ARTIST STATEMENT

My thesis exhibition, *Painter, Painter*, is a selection of recent paintings that point to my exploration of the notion of *home*. Through these works, I describe how a *home* without truth cannot endure.

As writers and advocates of art have noted before, a “[h]ouse is not a home.”<sup>1</sup> As a new Canadian from South Korea, whenever I become nostalgic about my familial *home*, or *homesick*, it is not the architectural structure of my childhood house for which I long. Rather, intangible, yet easy to describe pleasures come to mind: the smell of the salty air from the nearby sea, the heavy, sweet smells of neighbourhood street food, the animated voices and laughter of loved ones, my mother’s spicy cooking, and treasured family belongings kept in my mother’s closet for years. Thus, my journey into the subjective concept of *home* is a deeply introspective one, recently augmented by a new, uncharted journey into motherhood. As a new mother, I often find myself wondering about legacy: what will *home* mean for my child and what will my influence be in shaping her meaning of *home*?

In this exhibition, the selection of paintings I have submitted explore defined pieces of *home*: spaces with objects and memories, family stories, interactions or absence of interaction between occupants in ways that suggest dysfunction in the family, secrecy, or scenes of conspiracy that blur the idea of *home* as a shelter and a place of intimacy. Other ideas include issues of personal privacy and gender-based roles in the *home* environment.

Central to my work has always been the desire to communicate emotional and psychological experiences through visual stimuli, while bringing up to the surface the fragile and inconsistent reality of the world we live in. Influenced by Susan Sontag’s *Regarding the Pain of Others* and Gaston Bachelard’s *The Poetics of Space*, my work considers painting’s expressive nature as a tool to invent and re-invent apprehension-filled narratives within the domestic environment.

Interested in the notions of the *sublime* and *affect*, I typically explore the genetics of materials expressing and embodying different degrees of physicality and intensity, the scalable impact

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<sup>1</sup> Mira Schor, *WET: On Painting, Feminism, and Art Culture* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), 192.

of colours and tones on viewer's sensory systems, and the wide range of techniques accentuating the material presence of oil paint. The fluidity of oil makes it possible to capture the language of bodily gestures and to leave traces of my decision-making process.

I associate strong visual presentation with the experience of the *sublime* and painting's ability to affect and generate sensations. As a way of achieving this kind of presentation, large scale is often used to capture the viewer's attention with paintings' unavoidable physical presence. My smaller works, through the repetition of architectural motives, such as repeated doorways or windows, also attempt to achieve a sense of continuum into the unknown space, going beyond the physical frame of the paintings. Finally, colour plays an important role in generating visual and sensory impact on the viewer, creating an overarching psychological tone.

My process involves collecting odd images from multiple sources, focusing on the images of familiar spaces and family photos that have the potential to be twisted into a misfortunate drama.

Often, I begin by deciding colours for underpainting. At this stage, I keep colours to a minimum, perhaps applying one or two colours that are not contrary and help create a subtle background noise which evolves into the overall tonality of the painting. This tonality plays an important role in deciding what kind of stories the painting will embody, which will then have an impact on the image selection process. As the painting process takes over, it often dissipates my initial intentions that are consumed by the process itself.

My work tends to illustrate co-existing dualities that unveil inconsistencies. Such dualities often flourish in the *home* environment, touching on such opposing concepts as privacy and surveillance, interior and exterior space, gender equality and discrimination, protection and vulnerability, as well as safety and violence. This focus on inconsistency also affects the way in which I create scenes or paint figures. Although nothing is actually happening in most of the scenes, the images portrayed are filled with tension as a result of a deliberate resistance to idealized mastery of rendering figures. Destruction of forms brings out hybridized outcomes, where the co-existence of the emerging and the vanishing world generates the tension. As a result, in-between spaces are created where uncertainty speaks of potentials rather than finite results.

What I attempt to achieve out of seemingly infinite cycle of doing, undoing, and redoing is to

bring some kind of order out of seemingly chaotic world, creating what Bachelard terms as “poetic image” through which “the distant past resounds with echoes, and it is hard to know at what depth these echoes will reverberate and die away. Because of its novelty and its action, the poetic image has an entity and dynamism of its own.”<sup>2</sup>

The result is a psychological space that highlights painting as a space of contemplation where meaning is formed based on interpretation, synthesized experience, context and inventiveness on the part of the viewer and the artist.

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<sup>2</sup> Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, Trans. Maria Jolas (Boston: Stilgoe Beacon Press, 1994), xvi.