

CRITICS' PICKS LONDON

Apostolos Georgiou

Rodeo

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By Tomas Weber ☒



Apostolos Georgiou, *Untitled*, 2020, acrylic on canvas, 90 1/2 x 90 1/2".

Apostolos Georgiou's peculiar scenes beckon you in. The Greek painter's show at Rodeo London, "One by One"—occurring simultaneously with another Georgiou exhibition at Rodeo's gallery in the Athenian port city of Piraeus—comprises three paintings, hung low on the venue's exposed-brick walls, placing the viewer on the same level as their almost life-size human figures. Georgiou's scenarios are set in architectural spaces where one might imagine mingling, but any impressions of closeness are rebuffed with sardonic pleasure. The characters, with ashy marks for eyes and features in pasty grays, are closed off from the viewer, both entangled in and alienated from their unintelligible circumstances.

In *Untitled*, 2020, a woman is lying on top of a man reclining on a bed. The man appears sick, perhaps dying. Above them stands another male figure, with one hand on the prone man's head and another on the woman's back. A tenderness is palpable, laced with comic vacancy. While broad, blurry strokes imply motion, the overall impression is of stuckness and hesitation, like a glitchy video. In *Untitled*, 2019, a strained cocktail party takes place in front of a severe gray wall. Behind this barrier, an interloper straddles a tree, snooping on the festivities. But the outsider seems no less integrated in this dubiously convivial scene than the guests with their painterly, unresolved faces and their bulky, awkward hands.

Born in 1952, Georgiou has long been developing a distinct visual language for social relations, its effects ranging from the tragic to the hilarious. Connections are hazy, the circumstances of the present unfathomable; escape is only a faint possibility. In these paintings, the adventure of living with others is an endlessly beguiling spectacle, and the artist expresses a playful and antiauthoritarian attitude to making and seeing. Georgiou is still not kidding.