

Press Release

November 22
December 24, 2025Opening
Saturday, November 22, 2025
from 11am to 8pm

The Autumn Fall

Justin Williams

Entering Justin Williams' painting is like infiltrating a universe off the beaten path, one that sits between myth and memory, and where human bonds and tenderness are revealed. His painting echoes a bygone era, when men smoked pipes, grew beards, rode horses and wore suspenders.

With their matt surfaces, his paintings transport us a world away from our everyday experience of backlit images. His sanding down and scratching away of the pictorial layer exposes the grain of the pigments and lends the canvasses the texture of an ancient wall, in an almost fresco-like manner. His palette features natural, predominantly earthy tones—browns, ochres, greens and purples—illuminated here and there by blues and yellows.

His drawing, unconstrained by scale, is a play on simplification: a very large body represents an adult while a small one stands for a child. With its schematic proportions and instinctive language, his oeuvre borders on *Outsider Art*. His subjects are also far from the mainstream: beliefs, anecdotes and unseen coincidences, all borne by genuine emotional truth. One senses the raw sincerity of a self-taught artist, revealing himself in an auto-fiction that verges on naive candor.

And yet, Justin Williams is by no means an outsider artist. His framing and use of *mise en abyme* exude genuine sophistication. Scattered across the canvases, the vernacular details, implicit symbols and the subjects' costumes act as indicators of taste, undermining his oeuvre's deceptively naïve appearance. In the manner of Matisse, the artist allows himself the freedom to include decorative touches, placed here and there, seemingly to distract the viewer with their enigmatic presence.

His paintings tell stories, or rather act as inspiration for them, as they encapsulate a mood, an atmosphere, which sets the storytelling mechanism in motion. The emphasis is on community, family and certain lifestyles. The artist's upbringing, surrounded by nature in the expanses of the Dandenong Ranges in Victoria, Australia, comes as no surprise. Justin Williams' geography is that of migratory routes. His grandparents left Alexandria in Egypt for Australia, on the other side of the world. These roots can be glimpsed, for example, in the small image of a camel hanging on the wall in *Mother's ashes sat in a porcelain jar with a decorative bird on it* (2025). Now based on the Sunshine Coast, north of Brisbane, Justin Williams' paintings explore exile and reunion, families separated by distance or, conversely, communities united more closely through their very isolation. His sense of place is that of the uprooted, his sense of time belongs to that of family legends.

In his most recent series *The Autumn Fall*, the artist has included more individual portraiture than in his previous works, where groups of characters would form a scene. Now there is usually only one figure, sometimes two. They structure the painting, holding it together as much as serving as a subject to be represented. Justin Williams is less interested in their facial features than in their relationship to their setting. He places his characters both outdoors and indoors, where they blend into the landscape or the domestic scene that they inhabit, which in itself is enough to qualify them as humanistic painting.

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From his studio perched high in the mountains, Justin Williams paints the mysteries of forested and mountainous areas, depicting picturesque and folkloric atmospheres. His paintings explore the character of where he lives and celebrate the beauty of nature. His canvases are havens, portraying a close-knit and reassuring world.

Born in Melbourne, Australia in 1984, Justin Williams has seen his works travel the world over: Sydney, Paris, Los Angeles, London, New York... His works feature in some of the most prestigious private collections including the Beth Rudin DeWoody Collection (Palm Beach, USA) and the agnès b. Collection in Paris. Despite this recognition, Justin Williams remains disarmingly humble: "I'm not that good at painting; I've just become obsessed with it and now I'm too old to stop."¹

1. *Esquire Australia*, February 2025: https://www.esquire.com.au/culture/justin-williams-artist-interview/?page_data=2