

John Currin

Opening Credits

04 June – 12 September 2026
17 Savile Row W1S

"A horizontal landscape moves from blue sky on the left to a sunset on the right. It is a painful sensation of time passing and maybe a memory of childhood. And in the midst of this, Roman nosed people are acting out stuff. It's a parody of a memory, a parody of a sentiment, it's a child misunderstanding the present. Imagine hiring a theatrical crew to act out your past. The place feels real but the things that happened are acted out by costumed actors...That's why it's always Arcadia ... it's the childhood of a civilization." — John Currin on Poussin for The Brooklyn Rail, September 2025

John Currin's show at the Savile Row gallery focuses on a new series of paintings that set pairs or triplets of women with exaggerated physiques in ornamental, Arcadian landscapes. In the sequence of twelve mid-size paintings, performative models, reinterpreted from the pages of 1970s clothing catalogues, are poised in a confident display that provides Currin with the means to explore classical painting. In his rendering of the tension of fabric stretched tight across breasts, the light on feathered leaves and gnarled trunks, the radiant softness of flesh and hair, and the self-conscious assembly of limbs, these tableaus allow Currin to make masterful paintings that replace a disappointing contemporary world, with a 'lost golden world' that holds his nostalgia for the past. A group of five new drawings in ink on washed paper interpret the paintings in a new medium and sketches from his process are shown alongside the finished works.

Currin was the opening exhibition of the gallery in 1997, and in the nearly thirty years since, his combination of academic virtuosity and contemporary fetish has unapologetically progressed his painterly agenda. His male and female figures are an endlessly exciting architecture for paint; these new works show bodies that are various and imperfect, that perhaps suggest the ageing process and remind us that Currin has always made works that are in some way autobiographical. There is surprise in the dimensions of these bodies, an affectionate gag on the changing physiognomy of age, when shapes slip from the ideal to the fantastic. However, these imagined inhabitants of Arcadia present the easy confidence of maturity, of serenity and luxury, and capture the mutual misunderstanding of a child's view of adults and an adult's view of childhood. Pairing an imaginary landscape familiar in Poussin or in Watteau's romanticised and fantastical *Journey to the Isle of Cythera*, 1717, with the reality of Acadia National Park in Maine, Currin gives us an ornamental landscape bearing the animated actors, hilltops, weather and clouds of both the idealised past and the current self.

Sadie Coles HQ

John Currin (b. 1962, Boulder), obtained an MFA from Yale University, New Haven (1986), following a BFA from Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh (1984). Currin has exhibited internationally with recent major exhibitions including *My life as a Man*, Dallas Contemporary, Dallas (2019); *Paintings*, Museo Stefano Bardini, Florence (2016); DHC / ART Foundation for Contemporary Art, Montreal (2011); *John Currin meets Cornelis van Haarlem*, Frans Hals Museum, Haarlem (2011); and in 2003 a mid-career survey of his paintings travelled to the Serpentine Gallery, London, the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, and the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago. The same year, a travelling exhibition of drawings was organised by the Des Moines Art Center, Iowa.

His work has also been included in numerous group exhibitions including *I see his blood upon the rose*, The MAC, Belfast (2024); *Friends & Lovers*, FLAG Art Foundation, New York (2023); *DIX AND THE PRESENT*, Deichtorhallen Hamburg, Hamburg (2023); and *I will wear you in my heart of heart*, FLAG Art Foundation, New York (2021); *On Everyone's Lips. From Pieter Bruegel to Cindy Sherman*, Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, Wolfsburg (2020); *Nude: Art from the Tate's Collection*, Yokohama Museum of Art, Yokohama (2018); *Body Laid Bare: Masterpieces from the Tate*, Auckland Art Gallery Toi o Tāmaki, Auckland (2017); *America Is Hard to See*, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York (2015); *La Peregrina, A Contemporary Response To Rubens and His Legacy*, RA Royal Academy of Arts, London (2015); *Absentee Landlord*, Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (2012); *Celebrating the Golden Age*, Frans Hals Museum, Amsterdam (2011); and *What is Painting? - Contemporary Art from the Collection*, Museum of Modern Art, New York (2007).

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