

Giles Alexander
An Invisible Piper

[MARS]

4 April - 4 May 2024



As the son of an architect, Giles Alexander developed an inherent ability to translate the three dimensional world onto a two-dimensional surface. Nurtured within the illustrious walls of London's National Gallery, he cultivated a deep appreciation for the transformative power of painting to capture and transcend physical space and human time. Alexander's practice has always wondered about 'us' and asked how we find a sense of place in a landscape, in the world, indeed in the Universe? His work to date has explored ubiquitous themes of faith, reason, and the cosmos, always creating space for new work to extend an already decades long exploration into belonging and identity. It's with this in mind that Alexander now pivots his artistic focus beyond the celestial to perhaps the most universal language of all – music...

With the recent confirmation of Einstein's gravitational waves showing us that the whole Universe is humming, we can now begin to appreciate that every star, every planet, every continent, every building, every person is vibrating along to the slow cosmic beat (Frank 2023). It turns out that gravitational waves are more like sound waves in music - so in a way, what's just been observed for the first time is the song of the universe (Mizrahi 2020). As Einstein mused "Everything is determined by forces over which we have no control. It is determined for the insect as well as for the star. Human beings, vegetables, or cosmic dust - we all dance to a mysterious tune, intoned in the distance by an invisible piper."

New discoveries are reflected in our cultural accouterments but as Einstein's quip suggests, often reveal themselves serendipitously. It beggars belief that we process something as exquisitely subtle as music using only the most absurdly low-tech tools - bits of bone, lymphogun, tiny bundles of hair. It's like equipping a spaceship with an engine made of twigs, rubber bands and cheese. But it flies. (Faber. 2023).



An Invisible Piper Install, 2024
Photography courtesy of the artist



An Invisible Piper Install, 2024
Photography courtesy of the artist



The Reincarnation Snare
2024
Oil and Acrylic on Birch
50 x 55 cm
SOLD



Vanitas Resonator
2024
Oil and Acrylic on Birch
140 x 122 cm
SOLD



An Invisible Piper
2024
Oil and Acrylic on Birch
48 x 45 cm



An Invisible Piper Install, 2024
Photography courtesy of the artist



Video Killed the Radio Star
2024
Oil and Acrylic on Birch
62 x 54 cm

While childhood visual literacy was perhaps genetic for Alexander, the artist was also busy creating a deep auditory cache – growing up in a house where walls were clad with as many musical instruments as paintings. Like many of us he subconsciously created a sort of soundtrack, or playlist to his life. Music psychologist Dr Victoria Williamson says “studies based on how our memory is triggered from tiny clips of musical tracks have estimated that the average person has tens of thousands of music snippets in their mind’s jukebox by the time they reach adulthood. Just like all memories, music memories are rarely single-sense entities. The same song can have complex multi-sensory associations, which vary wildly from person to person. These additional connected memories can be visual, tactile, even olfactory, immediately transporting you to a particular place, feeling and/or time from your past.” She calls this the, “honey they’re playing our song” phenomenon.



Killer Queen Bitch
2024
Oil and Acrylic on Birch
62 x 54 cm

"Anchored in an academic tradition that upholds technical precision and craftsmanship, Alexander continues to fearlessly transcend his artistic boundaries, deliberately challenging the established norm. This is evident in his continued choice of non-conventional, challenging subject matter. In doing so, he encourages us to reflect upon the dynamic interplay between our past and present selves. British art historian, curator and arts broadcaster Kate Bryan says "One cannot help but directly think of Giles Alexander in relation to the maxim Know Thyself. As a painter he belongs to a long standing academic tradition of virtuously handled oil painting and precision draughtsmanship, yet he stands aside from this, quite purposefully drawing attention to moments where he departs from tradition. This is not wilful contrariness; Alexander uses and abuses his polished aesthetic as another way of interrogating his world and questioning all that we hold dear. Alexander has always focused his attentions on real and imagined space, often drawing our attention to the shifting boundaries between the two. There is a visual pun in his paintings between 'space' as a crucial component of all painting and 'space' the final frontier."



Meat is Murder
2024
Oil and Acrylic on Birch
62 x 54 cm



This Machine Kills Fascists
2024
Oil and Acrylic on Birch
62 x 57 cm
ON LOAN

"Without doubt Bob Dylan's single greatest influence and the first great voice of protest music was Woody Guthrie. Guthrie famously appeared playing in public with a homemade sticker attached to his weapon of choice, the guitar announcing, 'This Machine Kills Fascists'. Every guitar sticker thereafter has in some way been a descendent of that gesture. Django Reinhardt was a French Romani gypsy and arguably the first guitar God. Everyone of any note that's picked up the instrument since has in some way been indebted to and sited him as influence including, Hendrix, Beck, Pass, Benson Lage etc etc. Reinhardt was at the height of his powers during the German occupation of France in WWII. He and Stephane Grappelli and their Hot Club de France had seized the impetus of the Jazz craze that originated in New York and Chicago and created something new, infectious and entirely European. As with all the finer things in life, the Nazi elite loved Django's music, only catch was his ethnicity and cultural heritage didn't quite align with the Aryan party manifesto! Despite this for a long time they 'humoured' Django's 'racial shortcomings' and he and his bands were smuggled around Europe to play hi-class events for the German partying elite. Inevitably the wheels came off and Django found himself fleeing for his life and had to traverse the Alps on foot back to the safety of his family. Django played the now iconic French made Selmer acoustic 'Jazz' guitar with its distinctive oval sound-hole and flat cut away, with very light construction they were the only alternative to the more common American archtop 'f' hole jazz guitar's. To my mind, Django's guitar truly earned the sentiment of Woody's sticker. Furthermore I believe music will always win out over hate, ignorance and persecution because like art music is made from a position of love."

Giles Alexander 2023



I learned to hate the Russians
2024
Oil and Acrylic on Birch
62 x 54 cm
SOLD

"Leo Fender named his follow-up to the Telecaster, the Stratocaster after the space race at the height of American communist paranoia during the cold war and cast the die for every electric guitar made thereafter. I love the Idea of how many of these instruments have been used to export the American consumerist dream conceived of mid 20th century but also by contrast - how many have been used as a voice of decent against that same ideology - think of Jimi Hendrix playing his overdriven/distorted beyond recognition, Star Spangled Banner and setting his beloved Strat on fire!"

Giles Alexander 2023



You're the Voice, try and understand it
2024
Oil and Acrylic on Birch
65 x 60 cm
SOLD

"I found this gloriously loved and slightly beaten, Australian made Maton guitar last year. It's story and song had etched an entirely unique patina across it's Aussie timber surface. Around the same time as my find, Australia was gearing-up to vote on an Indigenous Voice to Parliament. There was an air of optimism and change but yet I couldn't shake an impending sense of disappointment, similar to those I experience ahead of Brexit and Trump. Of course one of the best efforts at capturing the momentous possibilities that a 'Yes' vote represented, came in the form of music. You're the voice, the John Farnham 80's classic did just that and for just a moment, I allowed myself to become swept along on a wave of positivity. Of course we all now know, the story ends broken hearted."

Giles Alexander 2023

For at least the past century, music has had a front-row-seat, documenting the ebb & flow of societal sentiments, whether illuminating the rise and fall of fascism, the relentless march of technology, the expansion of competing empires and geo-political ideologies and of course our ever-evolving human condition. The guitar in particular has enjoyed a democratic status amongst instruments, finding it's way into most societies cultural soundtrack in one format or another. Stickers on guitars have become a way for musician to personalise their instruments and steer personal or, in the case of a group, collective narratives. Alexander's practice has always engaged with historical narratives, whether investigating spiritual architecture, the science and philosophy of space exploration or through direct art historical quotation and reflects a keen awareness of the power dynamics embedded in cultural memory. His work becomes a form of visual archaeology, excavating layers of cultural significance to unveil the underlying stories that shape our understanding of the world; as a form of Contemporary History Painting.

But in mundane truth, in modern mega-capitalist society, music is something we use. We use it constantly, in industrial quantities. We socialise with it, exercise to it, relax to it, screen out traffic noise with it, shop to it, show it off to visitors, advertise snack foods and mortgages with it, use it to hustle us out of bed in the morning or lull us to sleep at night, artificially boost our enthusiasm for sport or sex with it, add it to movies to underscore plot twists and explosions, take the edge off uncomfortable silences with it (Faber. 2023). Alexander's new paintings juggle these multifaceted narratives, operating as visual essays, weaving together layers of art history, cultural references, and philosophical inquiries. They walk the same spiritual tight-rope as does their muse, a humble instrument that continues to speak a contemporary language while at once acknowledging the rich traditions of it's evolution.



Time flies, Love endures
2024
Oil and Acrylic on Birch
55 x 50 cm



An Invisible Piper Install, 2024
Photography courtesy of the artist



Off with his head
2024
Oil and Acrylic on Birch
30 x 28 cm



Paint it Black
2024
Oil and Acrylic on Birch
62 x 57 cm
SOLD

CV

Giles Alexander, born 1975, London, U.K

EDUCATION

- 2013 MFA, National Art School, Sydney
- 2009/11 Lecturer, Painting/Drawing, National Art School. Sydney
- 2006 1st Class Honours (Painting), National Art School, Sydney
- 2005 BFA (Painting), National Art School, Sydney
- 1999 Diploma in Painting, St Martins School of Art, U.K.
- 1998 Diploma in Graphic Design, Kentish Town College, U.K.
- 1995 First year BFA, 3D Design & Photography, Coventry University, U.K.
- 1994 Diploma Art Foundation, Epping Forest College, U.K.

SOLO EXHIBITIONS

- 2024 An Invisible Piper, MARS gallery, Melbourne
- 2023 Creation Myths and other Tall Tales, Olsen Gallery, Sydney
- 2022 Tall Tales and other Creation Myths, Olsen Gallery, Sydney
- 2022 Mote of Dust, Peter Walker Fine Art, Adelaide
- 2021 The Still Vague Vault, MARS gallery, Melbourne
- 2020 Beginning to see the light, Olsen gallery, Sydney
- 2019 Eternity: Far away so close, Anthony Brunelli Fine Art, NY
- 2018 Turtles all the way down, Nanda\Hobbs Contemporary, Sydney
- 2017 Vanitas, Nanda\Hobbs Contemporary, Sydney
- 2016 Fossil, Nanda\Hobbs Contemporary, Sydney
- 2015 Portal, NKN Gallery, Melbourne
- 2014 Bruno's dream, Australian High Commission, Singapore
- 2014 Alchemist's Opus, Peter Walker Fine Art, Adelaide, SA
- 2013 Our Father is a Red Giant, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney
- 2012 $E=mc^2$?, The Fine Art Society, London, UK
- 2012 Know Thyself, Peter Walker fine art, Adelaide, SA
- 2011 The Goldilocks region, GRANTPIRRIE, Sydney
- 2010 Reproduction, Dianne Tanzer Gallery, Melbourne, Vic
- 2010 Spacetime, Peter Walker Fine Art, Adelaide, SA
- 2009 Smoke'n'Mirrors, Kristian Pithie Gallery, Melbourne, Vic
- 2008 Neon Bible, Mori Gallery, Sydney
- 2007 Engineering Consent, Mori Gallery, Sydney

AWARDS, SCHOLARSHIPS AND RESIDENCIES

2023 Wynne Prize, AGNSW

2023 The Waverley Art Prize, Bondi pavilion

2023 Mossman Art Prize, Mossman Art Gallery

2022 The Waterhouse Prize, South Australian Museum, Adelaide

2022 Salon des Refuses, S.H Ervin Gallery, Sydney

2022 The Mandorla Art Award, Holmes a Court Gallery, West Perth

2022 The Alice Prize, Alice Springs Arts Foundation

2019 NG Creative Residencies, Provence, France

2016 Paddington Art Prize, Marlene Antico Fine Arts, Sydney, finalist

2016 Moran Prize, finalist

2015 Sovereign Asia Art Award, Hong Kong, nominee

2014 Art of Music, Charity Auction, AGNSW

2014 Fleurieu Art Prize, Adelaide, SA, finalist

2013 Archibald Prize, AGNSW, Sydney, finalist

2013 Sulman Prize, AGNSW, Sydney, finalist

2013 Blake Prize, Sherman wing Cofa gallery, finalist

2013 Fleurieu Art Prize, SA, finalist

2012 Moran Prize, Sydney, NSW, finalist

2012 Sovereign Asia Art Award, Hong Kong, nominee

2012 Fleurieu Art Prize, Adelaide, SA, finalist

2011 Archibald Prize, AGNSW, Sydney, finalist

2010 Arkley Award, Melbourne, Vic, finalist

2010 Moran Prize, NSW State Library, finalist

2010 Archibald Prize, AGNSW, Sydney, finalist

2010 RBS Emerging Artist Award, Sydney, finalist

2009 Directors stock room, Barrat White Haunch of Venison Gallery, NY

2009 Duke Prize, Brisbane, Queensland, finalist

2009 Wardlow residency, Melbourne, Vic

2008 Duke Prize, Brisbane, Queensland, finalist

2007 Duke Prize, Brisbane, Queensland, finalist

2007 Metro 5 Prize, Melbourne, Vic, 1st Prize

2006 Paddington Art Prize, Marlene Antico Fine Arts, Sydney, finalist

2006 Art On The Rocks, Sydney, Highly Commended

2006 Blake Prize, Touring Exhibition, NSW, ACT, Vic, Queensland, finalist

2006 R & M McGivern Art Prize, Maroondah Art Gallery, Vic, finalist

2005 Murray Sime Painting Prize, National Art School, Sydney, 1st Prize

2005 MCQ International Art Prize, MCA Sydney, 1st Prize
2005 Drawing Week, National Art School, 1st Prize
2004 John Olsen Drawing Prize, Sydney, Highly Commended
2004 National Art School, Awarded advanced standing
2004 Propeller 04, Sydney, Peoples Choice Award
1988 Art Scholarship (5 years) Bishops Stortford College, U.K.

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2023 Context Miami Beach, Anthony Brunelli Fine Art, US
2021 Sydney Contemporary, Sydney Art Fair, Olsen Gallery
2021 Spring 1883, Art Fair, Melbourne, MARS Gallery
2021 Art Wynwood, Miami Art Fair, Anthony Brunelli Fine Art, NY
2021 Crepuscule, curated by Benjamin Clay, Olsen Annexe, Sydney
2020 Returning to the Moon, curated Dr Michael Warner, Informality, UK
2019 Space, Gippsland Art Gallery, Vic
2019 Art Miami, Anthony Brunelli Fine Art, NY
2019 Landscape Obscurer, Nanda Hobbs Contemporary, Sydney
2018 Palm Beach Art Fair, Anthony Brunelli Fine Art, NY
2018 Scope Miami Beach, Anthony Brunelli Fine Art, NY
2018 Sydney Contemporary, Nanda Hobbs Contemporary, Sydney
2018 Small works show, Miesel Gallery, NYC
2018 Imagine, Curated by Simon Gregg, Gippsland Art Gallery
2017 Art Miami, Miesel Gallery, NYC
2017 Sydney Contemporary, Nanda Hobbs Contemporary, Sydney
2017 9 hours under ground, Curated Kate Smith, Sydney Opera house
2017 Size Doesn't Matter, Miesel Gallery, NYC
2016 Equus, curated by Kate Smith, Olsen Irwin gallery, Sydney
2015 Sydney Contemporary, Nanda Hobbs Contemporary, Sydney
2015 Face off, Gallery Ecosse, Exeter
2015 Hong Kong Central, The Fine Art Society, Contemporary
2014 Conquest of Space, Curated by Andrew Frost, Cofa gallery
2014 Fields of Vision: Art and Astronomy, Macquarie Uni.
2014 What Duchamp taught me, The Fine Art Society, London, UK
2014 Melbourne Art Fair, Martin Browne Contemporary
2014 Art14, The Fine Art Society, London, UK
2014 Winter Show, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney
2013 Post-grad show, National Art School, Sydney
2013 Sydney Contemporary, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney

2013 Art13, The Fine Art Society, London, UK
2013 Winter Show, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney
2013 London Art Fair, The Fine Art Society, London, UK
2012 Autumn Show, The Fine Art Society, Hong Kong
2012 Spring Show, Martin Browne Contemporary, Sydney
2012 The British Cut, The Fine Art Society, Hong Kong
2012 Signal 8, Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
2012 London Art Fair, The Fine Art Society, London, UK
2012 Hong Kong art fair, Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
2011 Step09, Milan Art Fair, BlackArtProjects, Milan, Italy
2011 (re)vision Lake Macquarie City Art Gallery, NSW
2011 '100' BlackArtProjects, Melbourne, Vic
2011 Wattle, Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
2010 Art London, Comodaa Gallery, London, U.K
2010 'Lost in Painting' Dianne tanzer gallery, Melbourne, Vic
2010 Hong Kong Art Fair, Cat Street Gallery, Hong Kong
2010 NOTFAIR, curated by Sam Leach & Ash Crawford, Melbourne
2009 Sullivan & Strumpf, Extropian, curated by Sam Leach, Sydney
2009 Comodaa Gallery, Australia Now, Covent Garden, London, U.K
2009 Kristian Pithie Gallery, Same same but different, Melbourne, Vic
2009 Innocence, Group Exhibition, Lorraine Pilgrim, Queensland
2009 Drawcard 09, NAS Gallery, Sydney
2008 Smithfields 140th Anniversary, Guild Hall, London, U.K
2008 Carteret Islands, Group Exhibition, Mori Gallery, Sydney
2008 Memento Mori, Group Exhibition, blkmrkt, Queensland
2008 Drawcard 08, NAS Gallery, Sydney
2007 Simply The Best, Group Exhibition, Lorraine Pilgrim, Queensland
2007 Greens Fundraiser, Mori Gallery, Sydney
2007 Solomon Fundraiser, Royal Australian Institute Architects, Sydney
2007 Reverentia, Group Exhibition, Lorraine Pilgrim, Queensland
2007 Group Exhibition, Mori Gallery, Sydney
2006 Drawcard 06, National Art School, Sydney
2006 Art Sydney 06, Hordern pavilion, Sydney
2006 Inspiration comes of work, Group Exhibition, Kudos Gallery, Sydney
2005 Degree Show, National Art School, Sydney
2005 Infusion 2005, Fonas Group Exhibition. Cell Block Gallery. Sydney
2004 Face Off, Group Exhibition, Stairwell Gallery, Sydney
2004 Fonas Infusion, Group Exhibition, Cell Block Gallery, Sydney

COLLECTIONS

Gippsland Art Gallery

Bond University

Macquarie University Art Gallery

ANU

Tweed river Gallery

Artbank

London Guildhall Art Gallery

MCQ International

Private collections in Australia, UK, Europe, USA, Singapore and Hong Kong

PUBLICATIONS

Vault Magazine, Slave to The Rhythm, Giles Alexander, Alison Kubler, February - April 2024

Ceridwen Dovey, Creation Myths/Tall Tales, Formist published Artist Book

Artist Profile, Feature article, Peter Hall, December 2021

American Real, The Privilege of Practice <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3F9zZG5z3OI&feature=youtu.be>

Naomi Riddle, Catalogue essay, August 2019

Louis K. Miesel, Catalogue essay, April 2018

J, Arvanitakis, Life of Sand, Catalogue essay June 2017

The Art of Collecting, Ben & Co, June 2017

C. Gable, A Sting in the tale, Robb Report, March 2017

D.Ryan, Channel 9 TV News, 22 Oct 2016

<http://www.snappytv.com/tc/3068149/1712323>

A. Frost, Open Road, Red Giant, Catalogue essay May 2016

J. McGeorge, Fossil, Luxury Living Magazine, 31 March 2016

<http://mag.luxuryliving.com/fossil-giles-alexander/>

Queen Anne's Gate: Works from the Collection of Sting & Trudie Styler, 24 Feb 2016

<http://www.christies.com/features/Works-from-the-Art-Collection-of-Sting-and-Trudie-Styler-6696-1.aspx>

P. Sawyer, Sting sells collection of modern masters, The Telegraph UK, 28 Oct 2015

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/art/art-news/11960394/All-change-for-Sting-as-he-sells-his-collection-of-modern-masters.html>

J. Dunn, Winkle out the winners, AFR, 26 Nov 2014

<http://www.afr.com/markets/equity-markets/winkle-out-the-winners-20141125-11twgr>

J. McDonald, Our Father is a Red Giant, Catalogue essay July 2013

H McKissock-Davis, Editors pick, Australian Art Collector 23 July 2013

<http://www.artcollector.net.au/GilesAlexanderOurFatherisaRedGiant>

K. Britton, REVIEW Our Father is a Red Giant, Raven, July 2013
<https://www.ravencontemporary.com.au/review-giles-alexander-our-father-is-a-red-giant/>

O. Craven, profile, Artist Profile magazine, May 2013
<http://owencraven.com/2013/07/giles-alexander/>

J. O'Sullivan, Giles Alexander joins Martin Browne Contemporary, AAC Sept 2012
<http://www.artcollector.net.au/>

50 Most collectable Artists, Australian Art Collector, January 2011

C. Miller, Profile, Australian Art Collector, September 2010
<http://www.artcollector.net.au/GilesAlexanderReflectionsofthehistoryofpainting>

A. Frost, The Rapture of Science, The Art Life, November 2009
<http://theartlife.com.au/2009/the-rapture-of-science/>

T. W. Lawrance, Australia Now: Contemporary Art, The Arbuturian.com, October 2009

D. Rule, Around the Galleries, The Age, July 2009

Admin review, Artinfo.com.au, July 2009

G. Maestri, Smoke and Mirrors, Exhibition Catalogue, June 2009

S. Leach, Neon Bible, Exhibition Catalogue, May 2008

C. Ardill-Guinness, Metro 5 prize documentary, Ovation TV, April 2007

T. Skewes, Image isn't everything, The Daily Telegraph, March 2007

Z. Skewes, Tinted Media Wins Praise, Herald Sun, February 2007

J. Roberts, Halfway around the world, The Age, page 3, 24/02/07

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