

The Contemporary Austin

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The Contemporary Austin Presents *Jiab Prachakul: Sweet Solitude*

The artist's first solo museum exhibition debuts in Austin



Austin, TX (January 29, 2025) – The Contemporary Austin announces *Sweet Solitude*, the first in-depth museum exhibition of artist Jiab Prachakul. The lushly detailed landscapes and sensitive portraits of friends, family, and inspirational figures from the broader Asian diaspora will be on view January 31 - August 3, 2025, featuring selected works from the past five years, as well as a newly commissioned portrait of author and poet Ocean Vuong. The exhibition is organized by Alex Klein, Head Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs at The Contemporary Austin.

Jiab Prachakul (b. 1979, Nakhon Phanom, Thailand) is a self-taught artist who studied film at Thammasat University in Bangkok before living in London and Berlin, and is now living and working in Vannes, France. After seeing a David Hockney exhibition of paintings while living in London in 2006, she was inspired to teach herself how to paint the human form. Prachakul's sensitive and distinctive paintings are conceived as layers of time that enfold memories, dreams, photographs, and



references to cinema, providing an intimate window into the artist's circle of friends, family, and muses.

Sweet Solitude comprises a selection of paintings presented in a sequence that loosely mirrors Prachakul's own journey as an artist, combining works that reflect upon her experience living in Europe where she has found a new community and sense of place. Since relocating to Brittany, France, in 2021, Prachakul has become immersed in the distinctive landscapes and waterways of her local environment, which evoke recollections of her childhood growing up along the Mekong River and, in this exhibition, resonate with the centrality of water to Austin's identity.

The figures in Prachakul's work, often from the Asian diaspora, are at play with the technical vocabularies of late nineteenth-century French painting, subverting Orientalist perspectives and addressing a gap in the Western Canon. Her richly textured canvases contextualize her subjects within their daily environments as well as scenes she constructs through photographing her sitters and sites before synthesizing the elements into one composition. Her muses include close friends whom she paints repeatedly, and fellow artists, such as filmmaker and artist Apichatpong Weerasethakul and author Ocean Vuong, whose portrait she produced especially for this exhibition. Having lived in Europe for much of her adult life, her paintings are often inflected with her desire for connection amidst a feeling of displacement, a sense of romantic longing pervading throughout. Prachakul's practice lends itself to intimacy with her subjects, photographing her subjects and sites repeatedly before synthesizing the elements into one composition.



Jiab's status in the art world rose considerably in 2020, as she won the BP Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery, London for her portrait *Night Talk* (2019), a work portraying her close friends sitting in a bar in Berlin: Korean designer Jeonga Choi and Korean film director Hyunah Kang. The award was followed by her first solo show in the United States in 2021, *14 Years*, presented by Friends Indeed Gallery (now Micki Meng) in San Francisco, the title of which refers to the years spent painting before she won the prestigious prize and commission from the National Portrait Gallery.

"I am continuously moved by the depth and emotion in Jiab's work," says Alex Klein, Head Curator and Director of Curatorial Affairs at The Contemporary Austin. "Her sensitive practice offers a powerful lens onto the complexities of diasporic identity, highlighting universal themes of displacement and belonging, while forging a new voice within the history of figurative painting. In particular, I am fascinated by the way she treats her canvases as layers of time that map personal memories onto collective experience, thus offering an intimate window into the artist's perspective and creating a shared space of identification."

"We are proud to present Jiab's first major museum exhibition and to introduce her practice to new audiences," says Sharon Maidenberg, Ernest and Sarah Butler Executive Director and CEO of The Contemporary Austin. "*Sweet Solitude* reflects many of the core values that define our mission at The Contemporary Austin, from fostering collaboration and embracing diverse perspectives to bringing well-deserved attention and support to lesser-known artists. I look forward to presenting Jiab's powerful work and hope that visitors from near and far will forge a personal connection with it. ."

The exhibition will be accompanied by a range of public programs and events. To stay updated, please visit thecontemporaryaustin.org.

Exhibition Credits:

Leading support for *Jiab Prachakul: Sweet Solitude* is generously provided by Pamela and David Hornik. Additional support provided by Micki Meng and Timothy Taylor.

MEDIA CONTACT

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Images:

(Header, L - R) Jiab Prachakul, *Jeonga (In Nia's Eyes)*, 2022. Acrylic on linen canvas. 63 x 78 ¾ x 1 ½ inches. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Purchase through a gift of Pamela and David Hornik. Image courtesy the artist.; Jiab Prachakul, *3 Sisters*, 2021. Acrylic on linen canvas. 78 ¾ x 63 inches.. Image courtesy the artist.; Jiab Prachakul, *Night Plunge*, 2022. Acrylic on linen. 78 ¾ x 63 x 15/8 inches. Collection of Marcie and Rob Orley, Michigan. Photo by Lance Brewer.

(In text) Jiab Prachakul, *Postcard from Bangkok*, 2021. Acrylic on linen canvas. 63 x 78 ¾ inches. Image courtesy the artist.; Jiab Prachakul, *A Conversation with Apichatpong*, 2020. Acrylic on canvas. 31 ½ x 39 inches. Image courtesy the artist.; Jiab Prachakul, *Night Talk*, 2019. Acrylic on linen canvas. 39 ½ x 39 ½ inches. Image courtesy the artist.

ABOUT JIAB PRACHAKUL

Jiab Prachakul (b. 1979, Nakhon Phanom, Thailand) is a figurative painter who lives and works in Vannes, France. Prachakul explores issues of identity and the human experience in her works,

which depict scenes of figures in contemporary urban settings - bars, restaurants, hotels and artists' studios. Her work focuses on representations of the Asian diaspora, filling in an absence in the Western canon of visual depictions of Asian peoples. Within each scene, a narrative unfolds: elements of personality are revealed, while Prachakul's attention to detail in clothing adds to a sense of hyperrealism and the specificity of the moment captured.

Prachakul is a self-taught artist who studied film at Thammasat University in Bangkok before living in London and Berlin. She began painting in London, after seeing a 2006 David Hockney exhibition of paintings and deciding to teach herself how to paint the human form. In 2020, Prachakul won the BP Portrait Award at the National Portrait Gallery, London, and has since had solo exhibitions with Micki Meng, San Francisco and Timothy Taylor, New York. Prachakul's work is in the collections of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art; North Carolina Museum of Art; Walker Art Center, Minneapolis; Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami; Long Museum, Shanghai; Cantor Arts Center at Stanford University; and Aïshti Foundation, Beirut.

ABOUT THE CONTEMPORARY AUSTIN

As Austin's only museum solely focused on contemporary artists and their work, The Contemporary Austin offers exhibitions, educational opportunities, and events that start conversations and fuel the city's creative spirit. Known for artist-centric exhibitions and collaborations, The Contemporary invites exploration at both its urban and natural settings—downtown at the Jones Center (700 Congress Avenue) and lakeside at the Laguna Gloria campus (3809 West 35th Street), which includes the museum's Betty and Edward Marcus Sculpture Park, with a growing program of commissions, temporary projects, and a permanent collection of outdoor sculptures by artists including Ai Weiwei, Terry Allen, Carol Bove, Sarah Crowner, Tom Friedman, Anya Gallaccio, Ryan Gander, Liam Gillick, Nancy Holt, Teresa Hubbard / Alexander Birchler, Paul McCarthy, Wangechi Mutu, Clare Rojas, Tom Sachs, Monika Sosnowska, Jessica Stockholder, SUPERFLEX, Marianne Vitale, and Ursula von Rydingsvard.

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