

JOHN KIRBY ALL PASSION SPENT

13 February - 30 March 2019
Private View Tuesday 12 February, 6-8PM

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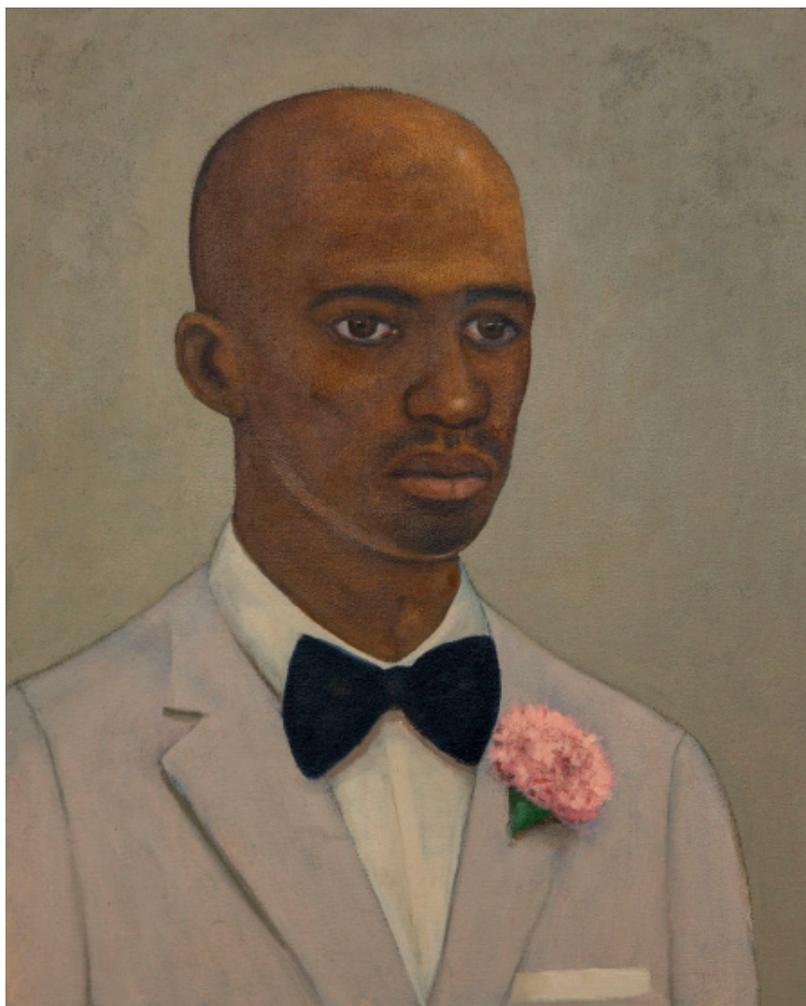
Celebrated British artist John Kirby is known for his paintings of enigmatic and disquieting narrative scenes, tackling the complexities of identity, gender and sexuality. This solo exhibition brings together new and recent works alongside selected paintings from the past two decades, focusing on the conversation between past and present portrayed by his enduring cast of characters.

Influenced by religious iconography, Kirby stages his figures in strange, or dreamlike settings. His characters depict the struggles and anxieties of childhood and adolescence, adopting ambiguous or coded gestures of play and dressing up, and hinting at charged, psychic dramas below the surface of the everyday.

Kirby's doll-like figures have been described as sublimated self-portraits, in which the themes of isolation or loneliness, and the repression of emotion are explored through symbolic narratives. Gender is represented as both fluid and equivocal, where boys and young men explore gendered motifs such as the doll's house, black-tie suit, or bridal gown.

The title of the exhibition, *All Passion Spent*, is taken from the title of the dramatic poem or 'closet drama', *Samson Agonistes* by Milton. Kirby's appropriation reflects the private search of his characters for 'calm of mind' following internal struggles.

Kirby's refined painting style has drawn comparisons with surrealist painter Magritte and American realist painter Edward Hopper, as well as Polish-French modern artist Balthus. Born in Liverpool in 1949, Kirby studied at Central Saint Martins and the Royal College of art, London, and lives and works in London. He has exhibited extensively in Europe and the United States in solo and group shows, and his paintings are included in numerous notable public collections including Tate, London; Victoria & Albert Museum, London; and Rene Magritte Foundation, Brussels.



Groom, 2017, oil on canvas, 50.5 x 40.5 cm.

For more information please contact Hannah Hughes: +44 (0)20 7920 7777 / hannah@flowersgallery.com.



Clockwise from top left: *A Doll's House*, 2014, oil on canvas, 152.7 x 122 cm; *House of Fun*, 2012, oil on canvas, 180.5 x 150 cm; *Boy*, 2013, oil on canvas, 152 x 122 cm; *Boy on a Rocking Horse*, 2014, oil on canvas, 121.5 x 91.5 cm.

NOTES TO EDITORS

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Exhibition opening hours: Monday - Saturday 10am - 6pm.

For further images please contact Hannah Hughes: +44 (0)20 7920 7777 / hannah@flowersgallery.com.