

# TAI SHAN SCHIERENBERG MEN WITHOUT WOMEN

16 OCTOBER - 23 NOVEMBER

PRIVATE VIEW TUESDAY 15 OCTOBER 6-8PM

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British artist Tai Shan Schierenberg, a former winner of the National Portrait Gallery's Portrait Award is well known for his paintings of Stephen Hawking and Seamus Heaney in the museum's collection. In this solo exhibition of new works focusing on the male subject, Schierenberg explores contemporary ideas of masculinity in Western society.

Taking its title from Ernest Hemingway's 1927 volume of short stories about bullfighting, boxing and embattled relationships, *Men Without Women* comprises a series of portraits and narrative scenes depicting the male figure in conflicting emotional and physical states. Drawing out themes of loneliness and camaraderie, violence and vulnerability, Schierenberg's cast of sports heroes, fathers and brothers, 'lads' drinking on the town and solitary figures provide a nuanced reflection on current debates surrounding masculine stereotypes.

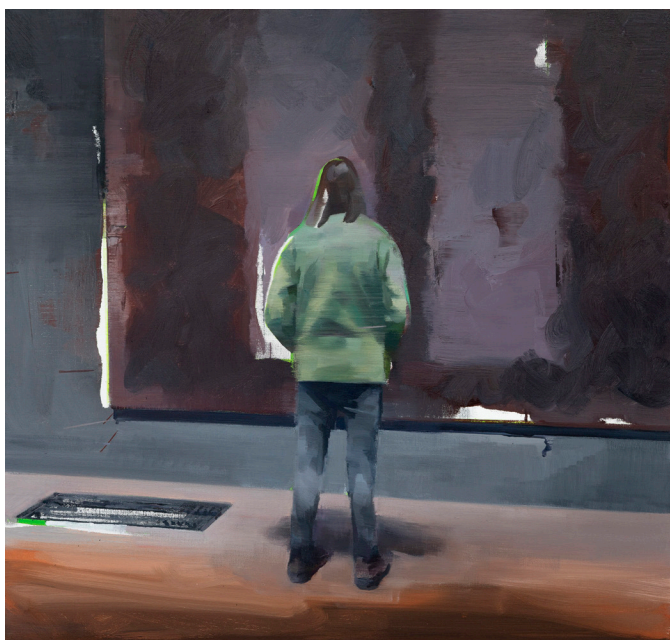
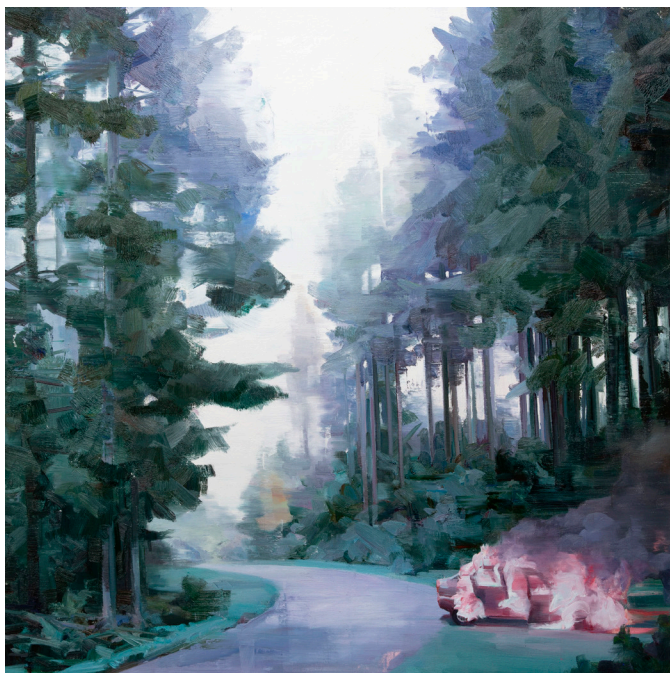


*Brothers*, 2019,  
oil on canvas, 140 x 200 cm

Images of muscular footballers, boxers and athletes mirror the emphasis on physical fitness in contemporary culture, questioning the societal norms that continue to reinstate strength and stoicism as idealised male characteristics. Painted during his residency at West Bromwich Albion football club for the Channel 4 series 'Artist in Residence', Schierenberg's portraits of the team and manager reflect his interest in the psychological significance of the sport and ideas surrounding the cathartic experience of its supporters. Their figures are vigorously constructed, with paint dragged, pushed and scraped across fluidly shifting planes to articulate opposing sensory experiences. Intensely raw, gestural brushstrokes create a complex surface tension, evoking the collision of limbs and clash of boxing gloves, while delicate membranes of dripped paint suggest emotional sensitivities hidden from the outside world.

Related examples of catharsis and spectacle include *Wanderer Before a Sea of Fog*, a modern-day take on Caspar David Friedrich's iconic Romantic painting representing awe and the sublime. In this contemporary rendering of the theme, Schierenberg positions his 'wanderer' in an art gallery, replacing nature with culture. Continuing the collision of vulnerability and the sublime, *Country Pursuits* constructs a cinematic narrative within the remote Northern European forest in which Schierenberg spent his childhood. Portraying a bleak Ballardian crash scene of a solitary car ablaze on the side of the road, and evoking memories of young men racing cars through the deserted forest at night, the painting creates an uneasy metaphor for the destructive issues of male identity.

For more information and images please contact Hannah Hughes: [hannah@flowersgallery.com](mailto:hannah@flowersgallery.com)  
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Captions clockwise from top left: *Country Pursuits*, 2019, oil on canvas, 122 x 122 cm; *No Man Left Behind*, 2019, oil on canvas, 90 x 141 cm; *Under the Mountain*, 2018, oil on canvas, 81 x 100 cm; *Wanderer Before a Sea of Fog*, 2019, oil on canvas, 97 x 102 cm

## ABOUT TAI SHAN SCHIERENBERG

Born in England in 1962, Tai Shan Schierenberg lives and works in London. He graduated from the Slade School of Art in 1987. In 1989 he won first prize in the National Portrait Gallery's John Player Portrait Award, and was subsequently commissioned to paint Sir John Mortimer for the Gallery and further works are held in the museum collection. Notable commissions include Professor Stephen Hawking, Sir John Madejski and a double portrait of Queen Elizabeth II and the Duke of Edinburgh. He was Artist in Residence at West Bromwich Albion football club from 2017-2018 as part of the Channel 4 documentary strand *Artist in Residence*. Schierenberg also regularly appears as a judge on the Sky Arts series' *Landscape Artist of the Year* and *Portrait Artist of the Year*.

## NOTES TO EDITORS

Opening Hours: Monday - Saturday 10am - 6pm or by appointment.

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