

Artist:
Andrew Morrow

Curator:
Marie-Hélène Leblanc

September 9
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[I Don't Want To Just] Paint The People

For over twenty years, Andrew Morrow has made paintings and drawings that address themes as diverse as Western history painting and contemporary visual culture, while examining issues around gender, sexuality, shame, reconciliation, and the apocalypse. More recently, he has been reappraising the sitter/artist relationship. What the works in this exhibition have in common is what Morrow defines as a *Relationally Based Studio Practice*, where studio work is rooted in his interpersonal relationships with his sitters. For the artist, each sitter is not only a subject to paint or draw, but also—and more importantly—an active participant whose subjectivity is valued. Morrow's recent work takes the form of studio sessions that position the studio as, in his words, "an axis for connection and community-building." In this way, his drawings and paintings are "placeholders for, and traces of, intimate exchanges with his sitters." Bringing together several bodies of work, many of which have never been presented in the same context, the exhibition reveals how Morrow's methodology allows a normally solitary studio practice to be grounded in social connections.

The works on view deal as much with the medium itself (in this case, painting and drawing) and an undefined relationship with representation, as it does with the sitters they depict. Often synthesizing multiple and sometimes multiplied figures, objects, abstract areas, and bits of personal text, Morrow's current practice includes quick, gestural works made in real time during sittings. Added to these are longer, more finished works made alone in the studio after a sitting. In this specific context, beyond the work's visual complexity, a greater immaterial and unobvious perspective takes hold that stems from the relational process and preparatory methods that involve *the other*. This willingness to highlight the importance of this approach emanates from a series of studio visits where, each time, the curator sat on the sofa that is used for his sittings. The title, *[I Don't Want to Just] Paint the People*, precisely expresses Morrow's need to go beyond painting individuals and to stimulate exchange and special moments that create a constellation of interrelated sitters.

In the weeks leading up to the exhibition, Morrow transformed the gallery into his artist residency workspace. And while the public was invited to sit for him to generate new sketches, even fully finished works, the gallery (much like its staff and public) became a kind of sitter in itself. Through this process, Morrow not only observes the site where the work is produced, but also synthesizes traces of it for future works. He subtly questions the role of the white cube as a space for experimentation, but also the gallery's potential as a gathering or federative place for those who become the subject of his works.

Biography

Andrew Morrow is a Canadian contemporary artist with a socially based practice grounded in drawing and painting. He holds a BFA from Queen's University and an MFA from the University of Ottawa, where he received the Michel Goulet Prize for Outstanding Thesis Presentation. Morrow's work has been widely exhibited and reviewed throughout Canada and abroad, in group and solo exhibitions in Toronto, Montréal, New York, Los Angeles, and Miami, among other places. He has been an artist-in-residence at DAÏMŌN, and is the recipient of the 2022 TRIAS Art as Healing Award, the William Blair Bruce Travel Scholarship, and, more recently, the APTPUO Excellence Award for Distinguished Teaching. In 2025, he was selected as a Senate of Canada artist to document His Majesty King Charles III's Speech from the Throne. Morrow's works can be found in the collections of the Ottawa Hospital, the Senate of Canada, the Canada Council Art Bank, and the City of Ottawa. In addition to practising as an artist, Morrow is a professor of painting and drawing at the University of Ottawa and a founding member of the Ottawa Arts Council Young Artist Award Committee. Morrow lives in Chelsea, Québec, with his family and their dog Kaza.

Acknowledgments

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