



PALAZZO
FOUNDATION

15-21 OCTOBER 2025

PARADISO

JAMES HAWKE



NorthStandard

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The Palazzo Foundation in partnership with NorthStandard is pleased to present *Paradiso* – the latest exhibition by British painter James Hawke, to coincide with Frieze London, 2025. Following *Life in Transit*, a significant 4-month presentation at Villa Pallavicino delle Peschiere in Genoa, Italy, the artist returns to London with a refreshed selection of paintings to be shown at the J/M Gallery in Notting Hill.

Paradiso is the latest phase of a series begun in 1998. Informally titled 'Poolside', Hawke meticulously paints beach scenarios using a combination of flat, fragmented shape, and colour. The multiplicity of life within these scenes, and the exciting breadth of colour (up to fifty in each work), make each painting a fascinating focus wherever they are hung.

The exhibition's title *Paradiso* is inspired by Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, an allegory that Hawke revisits regularly for its imagery of paradise, purgatory and hell. On the surface, each scene portrays a moment of peace and relaxed enjoyment but the reality, as in life and Instagram, is more complicated.

To achieve this, Hawke has developed a painting technique that eliminates texture as much as possible, leaving an almost flat (perfect) surface. With this method, he creates his complex visions of people and objects, each precisely described with just a few patches and shards of colour.

Curated by James Marshall, *Paradiso* runs at the J/M Gallery, London from 15–21 October 2025.

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JAMES HAWKE

James Hawke has painted and drawn full-time since his time at college, and his practice is devoted to painting and preparatory drawing. He studied drawing at L'École supérieure des Beaux Arts, Paris (Studio Pierre Matthey), completed a foundation course at Great Yarmouth College of Art and Design, and then painting at Manchester Polytechnic. Today, he works from his studio in Norfolk.

A defining strand of Hawke's work is *Poolside*, a project he has developed since 1998. Drawing on the imagery of tourist culture – holiday brochures, Mediterranean beaches, and communal leisure spaces – Hawke explores the human relationships within these crowded, colourful settings. His compositions capture the strange, fleeting communities that emerge in such places, transforming the everyday into layered visions of idealism, collectivity, and escape.

On the surface, James Hawke's works give us a bright and optimistic experience. But the cryptic social relationships, and the myriad messages being telegraphed through dress and behaviour within a large community of holidaymakers, are endlessly interesting to people-watchers. A precise and painstaking method of painting leaves the images flat and almost devoid of texture, lending an almost automated feel to the *Poolside* series. Yet close-up the meticulous labour that has created them becomes apparent. It is one of the many paradoxes to be found with *Poolside*. Sometimes the effect is unsettling, its mood accentuated by the posed nature of some images. At other times the painting may appear to be a *tableau vivant* – posed and somehow too perfect in its theatricality – but this is never the case as James rarely alters the juxtapositions of the figures in order to create a better image. Instead he searches through many thousands of photographs for exactly the right composition and balance of movement that often inhabits these complex beach and holiday scenes.

It is this approach (reimagining domestic and communal settings through bold colour and densely populated compositions) that shaped *Life in Transit* – and now also informs *Paradiso*. Hawke's practice poetically aligns with the Palazzo Foundation: exploring the ways in which transit, exchange, and cultural imagination shape both history and the contemporary world.





2024
BAY II
 Oil on linen
 120 x 90 cm



2025
Ocean X
 Oil on linen
 120 x 90 cm

ON THE SURFACE



A viewer can look at my paintings and think they are facile because their flatness suggests simplicity. However, they are not painting by numbers and the photographs I work from are a starting point. Each figure and line is meticulously redrawn to connect in a particular way. Every colour juxtaposition is altered to create or remove a tonal contrast. Texture, an elemental art expression used for emotion, is removed so that the focus is on the painting, not my feelings.



MY INTEREST
IN DANTE IS
RELATED TO MY
GREATEST PASSION,
RENAISSANCE ART.



PARADISO



The exhibition's title Paradiso is inspired by Dante's *La Divina Commedia*, an allegory I visit regularly for its imagery of paradise, purgatory and hell. On the surface, each of my paintings portray a moment of peace and relaxed enjoyment but the reality, as in life and Instagram, is more complicated.

The artist and architect Leon Battista Alberti is someone I constantly refer to when I am making a composition. Alberti was a Renaissance polymath. He conceived the idea of paintings as windows on the world. All 'scene' pictures, come after his theories of perspective in *On Painting*, published in 1435. His ideas profoundly changed the way artists worked. It is still in print (Penguin Classics); "Inspired by the order and beauty inherent in nature, his groundbreaking work sets out the principles of distance, dimension and proportion; instructs the painter on how to use the rules of composition, representation, light and colour to create work that is graceful and pleasing to the eye". His ideas are challenged by artists but their essence remains true to this day.

A core principle in *On Painting* is that the world that you create must be perfect and the rules that govern that world must be consistently adhered to and applied, otherwise the world falls apart. This loops back into the concept of paradise. From the artist's perspective the technical intention to create it can be at odds with the scene itself.





2025
DETAIL I
Oil on linen
30 x 30 cm



2025
DETAIL II
Oil on linen
30 x 30 cm



2025
DETAIL III
Oil on linen
30 x 30 cm



2025
DETAIL IV
Oil on linen
30 x 30 cm



2022

Beach City

Oil on canvas
120 x 170 cm



2023

Brighton III

Oil on linen
120 x 120 cm



2025
East Coast I
 Oil on linen
 100 x 100 cm



2025
East Coast II
 Oil on linen
 100 x 100 cm

‘POOLSIDE’ AND BEACHES



Paradiso is the latest phase of a series begun in 1990s. Informally titled ‘Poolside’, I became fascinated by the holiday lives portrayed in holiday brochure photographs. They were intended to lure people into buying a dream-like experience. For me, the staged, hyper-coloured scenes portrayed something darker. Perhaps it was partly the insincerity of the advertising promise that interested me but magnifying them in paintings turned the ‘actors’ in the (usually tiny) photographs back into people.

This focus on seeking the perfect moment, where we are released from everyday responsibilities and placed into a blue paradise (sky, sea, pool) has developed over the years. I now mostly paint beach scenarios where I find a multiplicity of humanity to work with, as well as that longing for the perfect moment. They feature us in our vast variety of activities: playing, arguing, reading, swimming, drinking, thinking, smoking, laughing... even, like us, people-watching.

Crowded beaches are unique social places. They are the only place we will undress in front of strangers and then sit or lie next, almost naked, next to an unknown person for the day. They are places where we can suspend our concern about class or culture in a collective act of leisure.



2024

Town Beach III

Oil on linen
70 x 70 cm



2024

Ocean II

Oil on linen
120 x 120 cm



2025

Cruise III

Oil on linen
120 x 120 cm



2024

Bay III

Oil on linen
100 x 100 cm



2025

Bay I

Oil on linen
100 x 100 cm



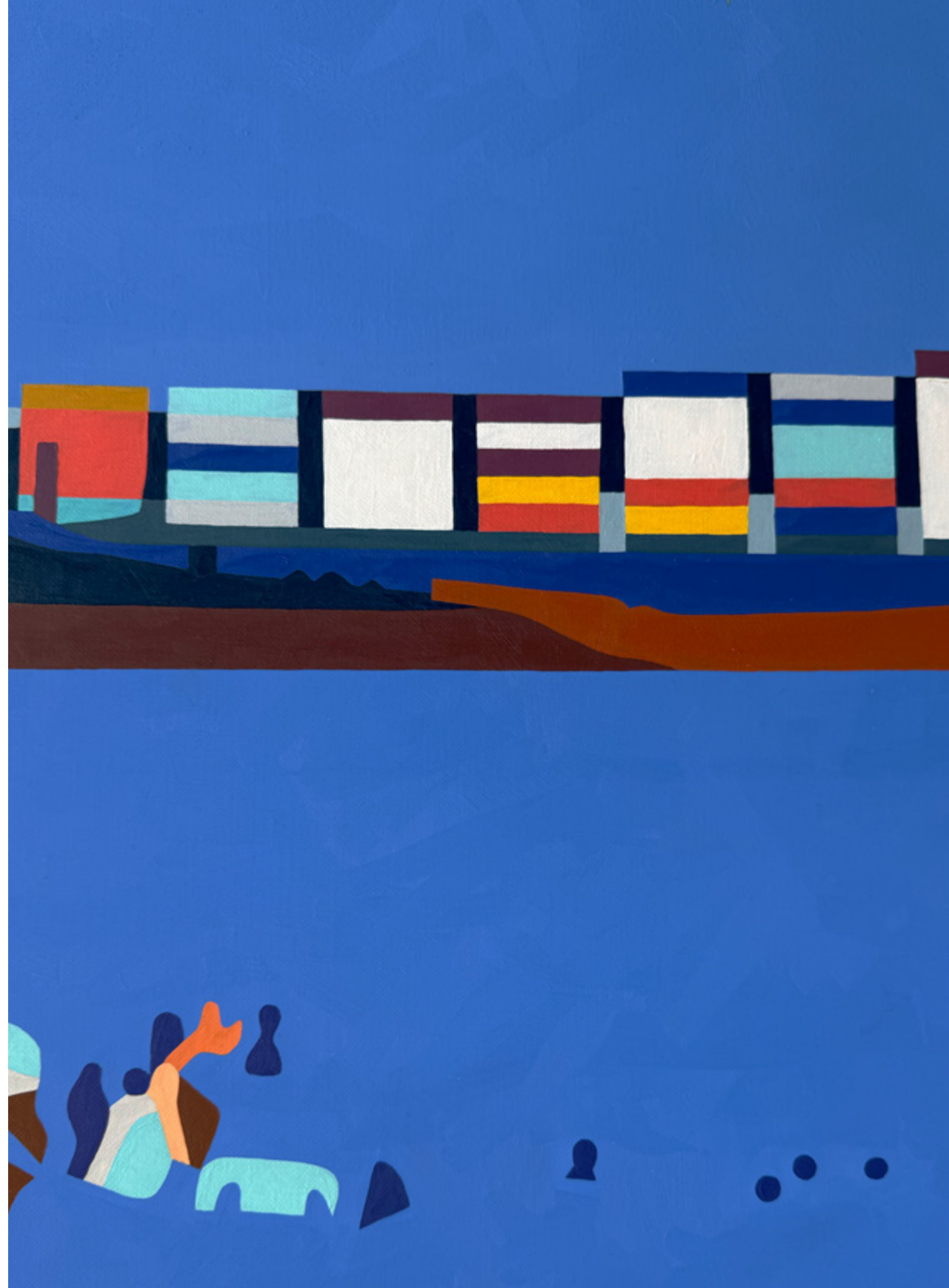
2024

Town Beach II

Oil on linen
70 x 70 cm



2025
Container II
Oil on linen
150 x 120 cm



PALAZZO FOUNDATION

The Palazzo Foundation is a charitable organisation set up specifically to restore Villa delle Peschiere to its former glory and to secure its future.

Villa delle Peschiere has always been a private haven for art and culture. Now, with the help of the Palazzo Foundation, it opens its doors to visitors who can experience the art and culture within, as static exhibits and performance art. In return, visitors express their appreciation with charitable donations. These donations directly fund the restoration of the Villa and the curation of the artistic content within.

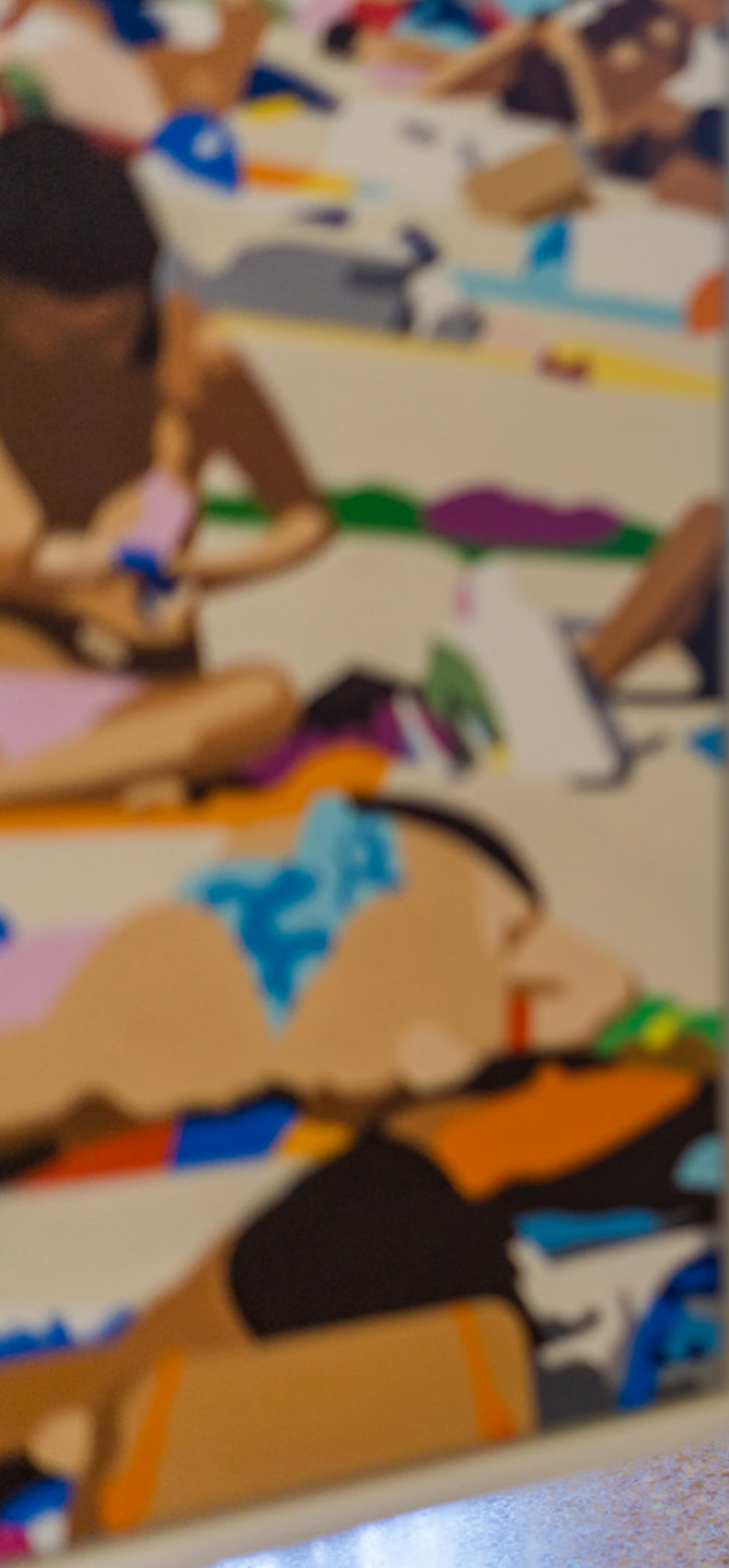
The Palazzo Foundation gives everyone the chance to experience a carefully curated collection of visual and performance art in the unique surroundings of Villa delle Peschiere, a beautiful Renaissance villa which has been at the centre of Genoese trade and culture for more than 500 years.

Learn more about Palazzo Foundation via the QR code below.




WE BELIEVE IT IS
OUR DUTY TO SHARE THIS
MAGNIFICENT PLACE
AND TO CONSERVE AND
PROTECT IT FOR FUTURE
GENERATIONS



SUPPORT PALAZZO FOUNDATION

As a charitable organisation, we rely on our supporters to help us preserve and celebrate the beauty of Villa delle Peschiere, ensuring its art, architecture, and history can inspire everyone for generations to come.

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An abstract painting featuring a dense crowd of stylized human figures. The figures are composed of various geometric shapes and a rich color palette including earthy browns, vibrant reds, purples, blues, and greens. The composition is layered, with some figures appearing more prominent than others, creating a sense of depth and movement. The overall style is reminiscent of mid-20th-century abstract art.

JAMES
HAWKE



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