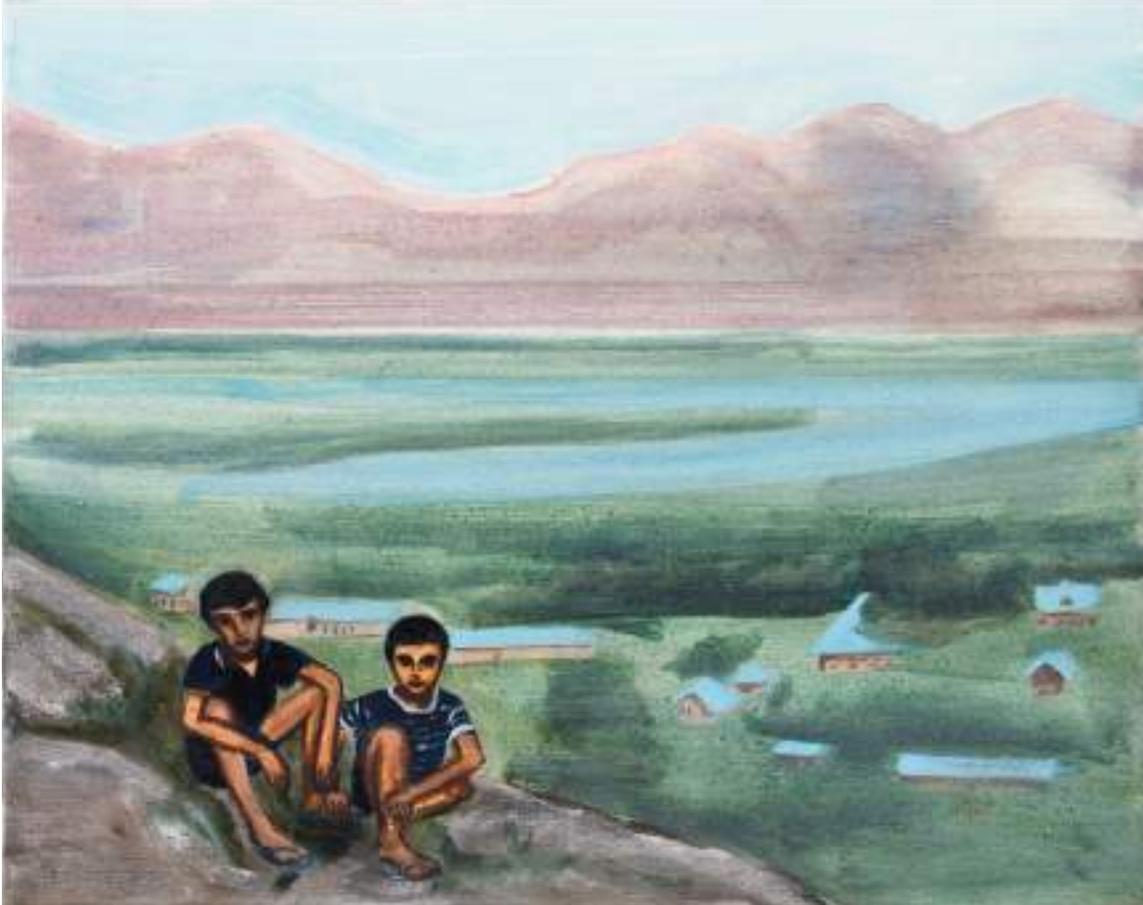
A painting depicting two young boys washing clothes in a river. The boy on the left is wearing a blue striped shirt and is leaning over a large, round, greyish stone. The boy on the right is wearing a red shirt and is also leaning over a similar stone. The water is a deep blue-grey color, and the background shows more rocks and a hazy sky. The overall style is somewhat somber and realistic.

LGDR

Matthew Krishanu

*Undercurrents*

## LGDR



Matthew Krishanu. *Two Boys (Mountains, Kashmir)*, 2021. Oil on canvas, 15 ¾ × 19 ¾ × 1 inches (40 × 50 × 2.5 cm)

### Allie Biswas on Matthew Krishanu

Memories of childhood permeate the subtropical world that Matthew Krishanu constructs in his evocative paintings. In these works, the past is distilled and reassembled to create vivid scenes that feel fused to a former time. Tangible environments shape these narratives: powdery pastel terrains bookended by cloudless blue skies and pools of turquoise water, interior spaces (particularly churches) incorporate palm trees and other vernacular additions, such as primary-color streamers that cascade from the ceiling. Especially critical to these precise, atmospheric scenes are the artist's subjects. The mostly Brown figures who occupy Krishanu's compositions—Indian and Bangladeshi children, in the main—reflect the artist's own biography, namely the first eleven years of his life, which were spent in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and included visits to West Bengal, India. Born in

Bradford, England, to an Indian mother and a White, English father, Krishanu generates his paintings from this formative period, which made him aware of people “not just as individuals, but also as very specific cultural groupings.”

The artist’s paintings of himself and his brother, which form the *Another Country* series, initiated in 2012, mark an important transitional point in Krishanu’s practice and led him to producing works in series—a method that now guides his practice. In *Boy Among Rocks (Kashmir)* (2020) and *Boat* (2018), the young subjects perform acts of day-to-day heroism, commanding the picture plane as they seamlessly interact with the land. The broad, concentrated brushstrokes of the former work, which emit the weight of the rocks as forcefully as the rapid speed of the flowing river, and which relay Krishanu’s affinity for dense abstraction, contrast with the glacial stillness of the latter, in which the mark-making is noticeably subdued, forming uninterrupted sections of translucent color.

Although based on real accounts, sourced from family photographs, Krishanu’s subjects resist autobiographical ties. Instead, bloodlines are solely relied upon for the purpose of “feeling that I can use and own the subject,” as the artist explains. This emotional familiarity allows Krishanu to forge life within his portraits through subjects that are as self-assured (*Boy with Bow and Arrow*, 2021) as they are interdependent (*Two Boys [Mountains, Kashmir]*, 2021). These charged narratives not only carry the reveries, joys, and hesitations of their subjects; they also convey Krishanu’s formal engagement with other artists. Walter Sickert’s *Portrait of an Afghan Gentleman* (c. 1895) and *La Hollandaise* (1906)—which, for Krishanu, are “primarily about the paint itself”—have been longstanding references for the artist, while the taut compositional structures used by Félix



Matthew Krishanu, *Boat*, 2018, Oil on canvas, 78 3/4 x 118 x 1 inches (200 x 300 x 2.5 cm)



Matthew Krishanu, *Mission*, 2020, Oil on canvas, 71 x 94 1/2 x 1 inches (180 x 240 x 2.5 cm)

Vallotton in works such as *Le Ballon* (1899) are evident in Krishanu's own approach. His *Four Poster Bed* (2022) focuses on a lone, sleeping figure positioned toward the middle of the canvas, whose serene state is mirrored by the stillness of the empty room, made luminous through gauzy layers of pale green and white. Similarly, *Boy and River* (2022) is an exercise in geometric formalism, where the triangular terrain in the foreground is reiterated by the vast mountainscape in the backdrop, both of which accentuate the diminutive size of the solitary child in the frame.

The artist's attentiveness to non-White subjects is "for people who want to see that as normal and resonant and powerful—and not just political." While Krishanu's scenes of boyhood help to rectify the historical objectification of Brown bodies within Western art history—figures that have often been handled anthropologically, denied individuality or soul—his *Mission* paintings, also begun in 2012, are a response to prevailing pictorial representations of Christianity as a European religion.

Such images, ingrained within our collective unconscious, are not without consequence. As Krishanu says, "Western art depicts Christ as White. It's an art-historical issue, which has then become a tool of White supremacy." Similarly, Krishanu's works reflect on how the Church has been co-opted as an imperial force. The artist's paintings of the church relate to the work carried out by his parents in Bangladesh. Krishanu's father was a priest who provided ministerial services, while his mother (a Bengali Brahmin who was born into a Christian family following her father's conversion from

Hinduism) founded a women's theological organization that reinterpreted scripture from female perspectives. The scene rendered in *Mission* (2020), a sweeping canvas compared to Krishanu's more intimately scaled compositions, would have been a regular occurrence for the artist. Surrounded by an extensive congregation of Bangladeshi men and children, the artist's father stands on a stage, noticeably the only White person in the scene. An oversized figure who almost appears to hover above the crowd, the priest's physicality creates distance. His sterile gaze cannot be met. Krishanu's tactic is discernible yet unobtrusive—an undercurrent throughout his work. In this painting, it is the White figure who is portrayed as foreign, as strange—as the conspicuous “other.”

In *Communion (Kneeling)* (2022), the artist continues to quietly dismantle the notion of White Christian leadership as the ideal. The two figures who occupy the center of this composition represent the artist's father and a Bangladeshi bishop, one juxtaposed with the other. While the Bengali figure is portrayed as authoritative and revered, as he carefully places his hand on a youth's head in a blessing ritual, his White counterpart is immediately diminished by a blank stare. The tactility demonstrated by the bishop contrasts with the father's rigid pose as he tightly grips a glass with both hands.

*Communion (Kneeling)* also speaks to the artist's wider project of reclaiming Christianity as an Asian faith. Krishanu often navigates these ideas through discreet gestures, such as the painting that hangs on the wall in *Four Figures (Crucifixion)* (2021), which presents a Bangladeshi man, dressed in a lungi, on the cross. In infiltrating his paintings with such images, Krishanu challenges what a crucifixion can look like, while underlining his clear interest in the skin color of Christ as represented in art. In other works, Krishanu's approach is more forthcoming. *Four Nuns* (2020) features a group of Indian women whose collective dynamic is palpable. Resplendent in white saris, with cross pendants resting on their chests, the interiority of these figures creates a quiet yet persuasive force, reminiscent of portraits by Alice Neel or Gwen John. In this way, Krishanu's works are less about the legacies of empire—or even religion itself—as they could be (mis)read, but relate instead to the matter of autonomy. The *Mission* paintings suggest that culture—in this case, faith—is a phenomenon that is indigenous and homegrown, rather than merely transplanted or enforced by Europeans.

Krishanu's works, in the end, seem to suggest that it is nature to which we might devote ourselves, just as the *Two Boys* do. The artist's *House of God* paintings position the fading architectural remnants of colonialism amidst gleaming landscapes. We are left in awe of *this* world.

## LGDR

Memory and imagination are central to the work of the London-based painter Matthew Krishanu (b. 1980, Bradford), whose figurative paintings explore childhood, religion and the legacies of colonialism and empire. Recent exhibitions include *Mixing It Up: Painting Today*, Hayward Gallery, London (2021); Coventry Biennial, Leamington Spa Art Gallery & Museum and Herbert Art Gallery & Museum (2021); *Everyday Heroes*, Hayward Gallery/Southbank Centre, London (2020); *A Rich Tapestry*, Ikon Gallery at Lahore Biennale (2020); and *New Figurations*, Jhaveri Contemporary, Mumbai (2019). Solo exhibitions include *Arrow and Pulpit*, Tanya Leighton, Berlin (2021); *Picture Plane*, Niru Ratnam Gallery, London (2020); *House of Crows*, Matt's Gallery, London (2019); *The Sun Never Sets*, Midlands Arts Centre, Birmingham (2019) and Huddersfield Art Gallery (2018). He has works in collections including the Arts Council Collection, Government Art Collection (UK); Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery; Huddersfield Art Gallery; The Kiran Nadar Museum of Art, India; and Jiangsu Art Museum, China.

### About LGDR

Founded by Dominique Lévy, Brett Gorvy, Amalia Dayan, and Jeanne Greenberg Rohatyn, LGDR is a collaborative international art venture that brings expertise and vision to its disciplines. LGDR represents and partners with artists and estates—realizing seminal projects and furthering legacies. From placing primary and secondary works of the highest quality and advising clients on the development of their collections, to harnessing its institutional relationships and presenting a curated program with scholarly publications, LGDR puts artistic voices first.

In forming LGDR, the four partners merge their respective specialties across 20th- and 21st-century art; their individual reputations as leaders and tastemakers; and their separate histories as principals of galleries with exemplary exhibition programs. Both international and local in practice and perspective, LGDR has unique spaces and unmatched market knowledge in New York, London, Paris, and Hong Kong in addition to off-site presentations and satellite teams around the world.

#### LGDR

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Wed — Sat, 11am — 6pm

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*Other Places*

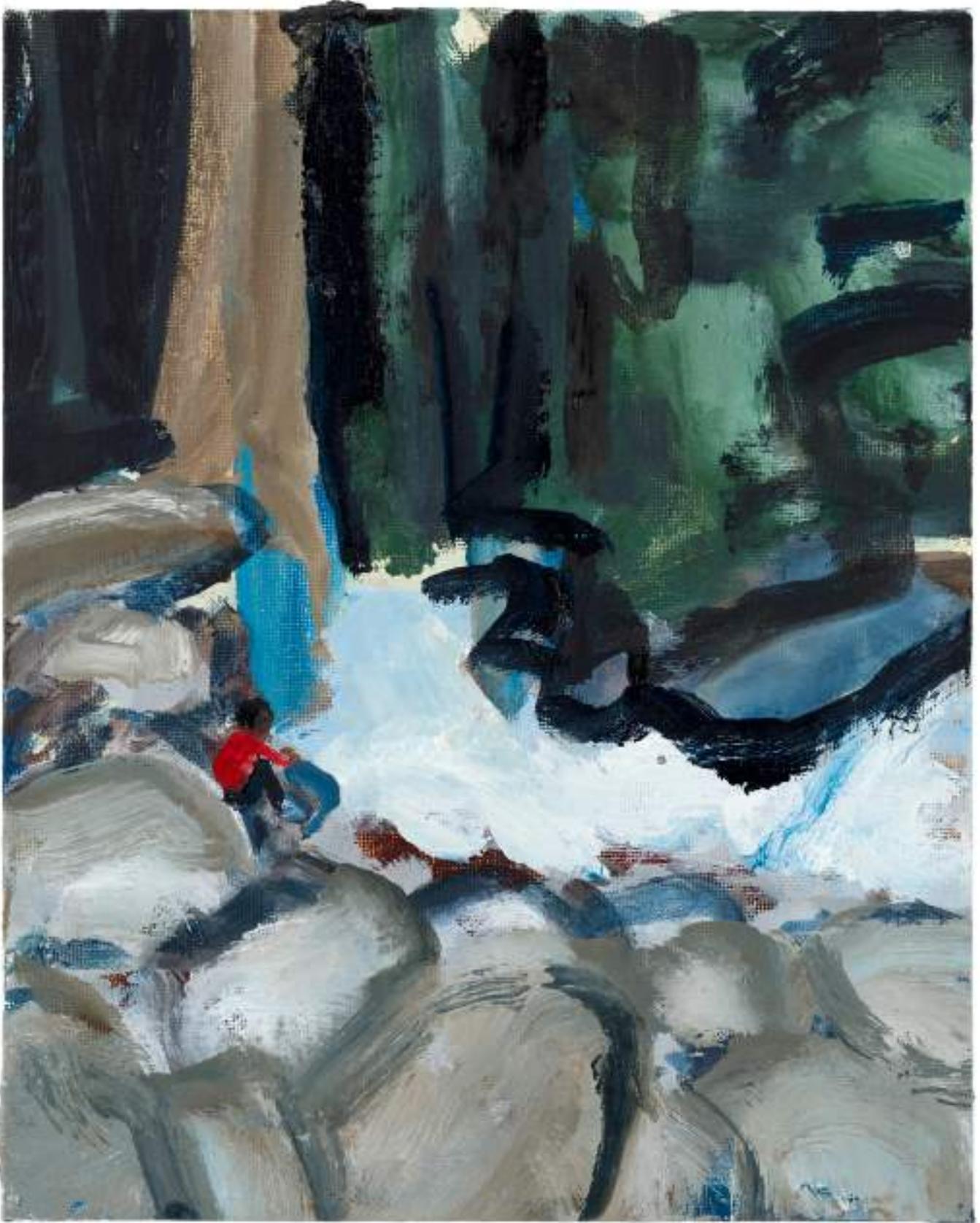


**Matthew Krishanu**

*Two Boys Among Rocks (Kashmir)*, 2020

Oil on board

10 x 13 ¼ x 1 inches (25 x 35 x 2.5 cm)

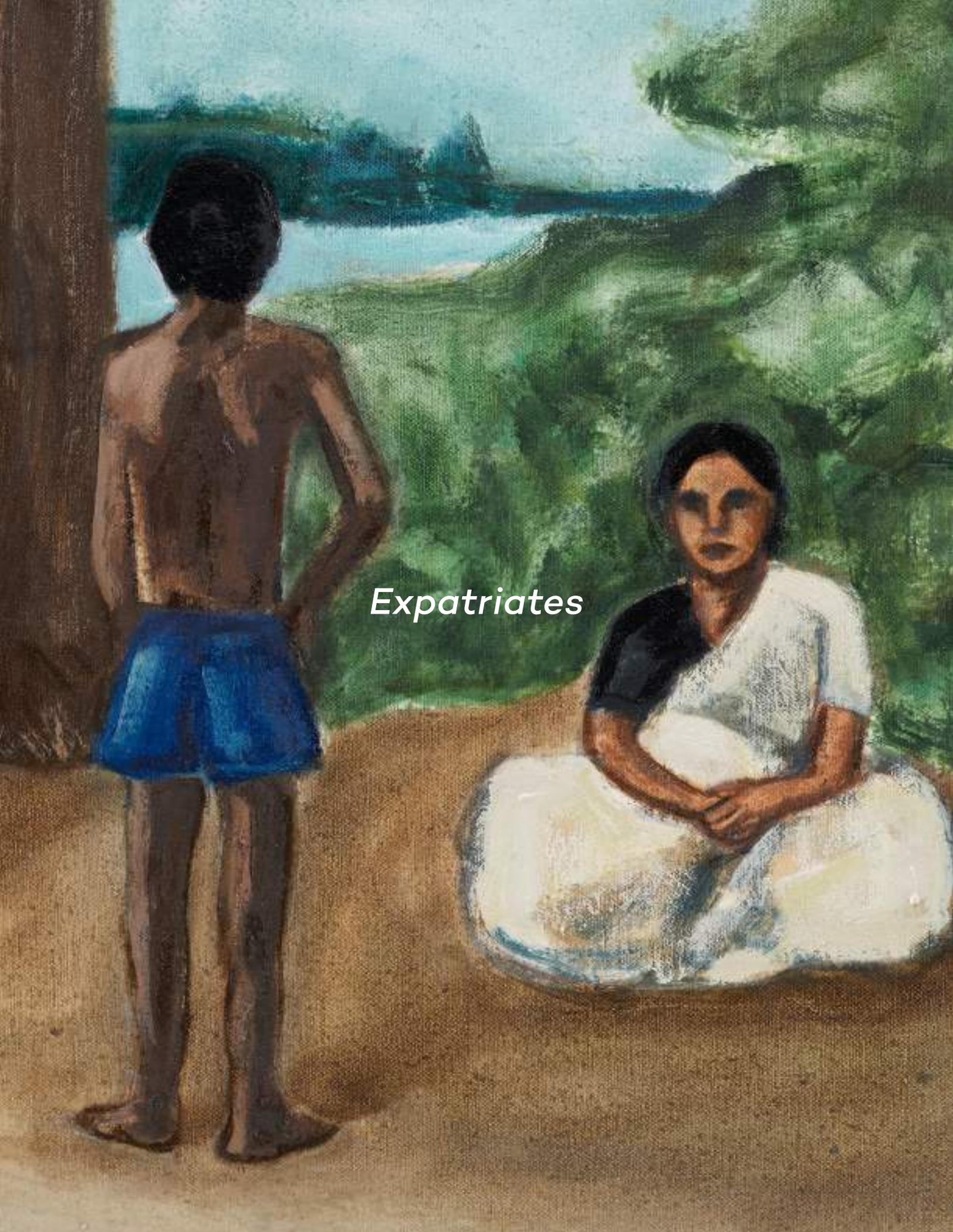


**Matthew Krishanu**

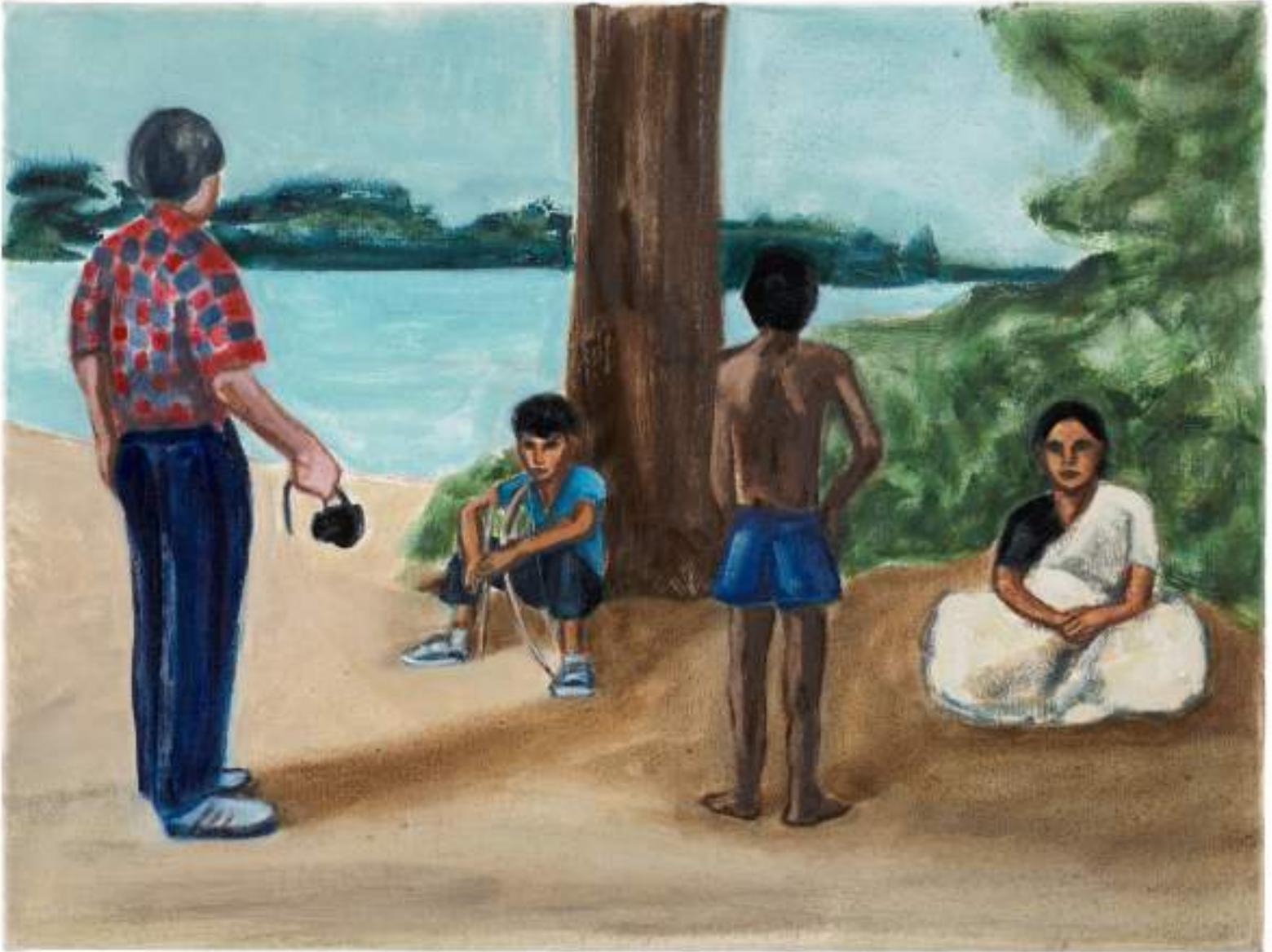
*Boy Among Rocks (Kashmir)*, 2020

Oil on board

10 x 8 x 1 inches (25 x 20 x 2.5 cm)



*Expatriates*



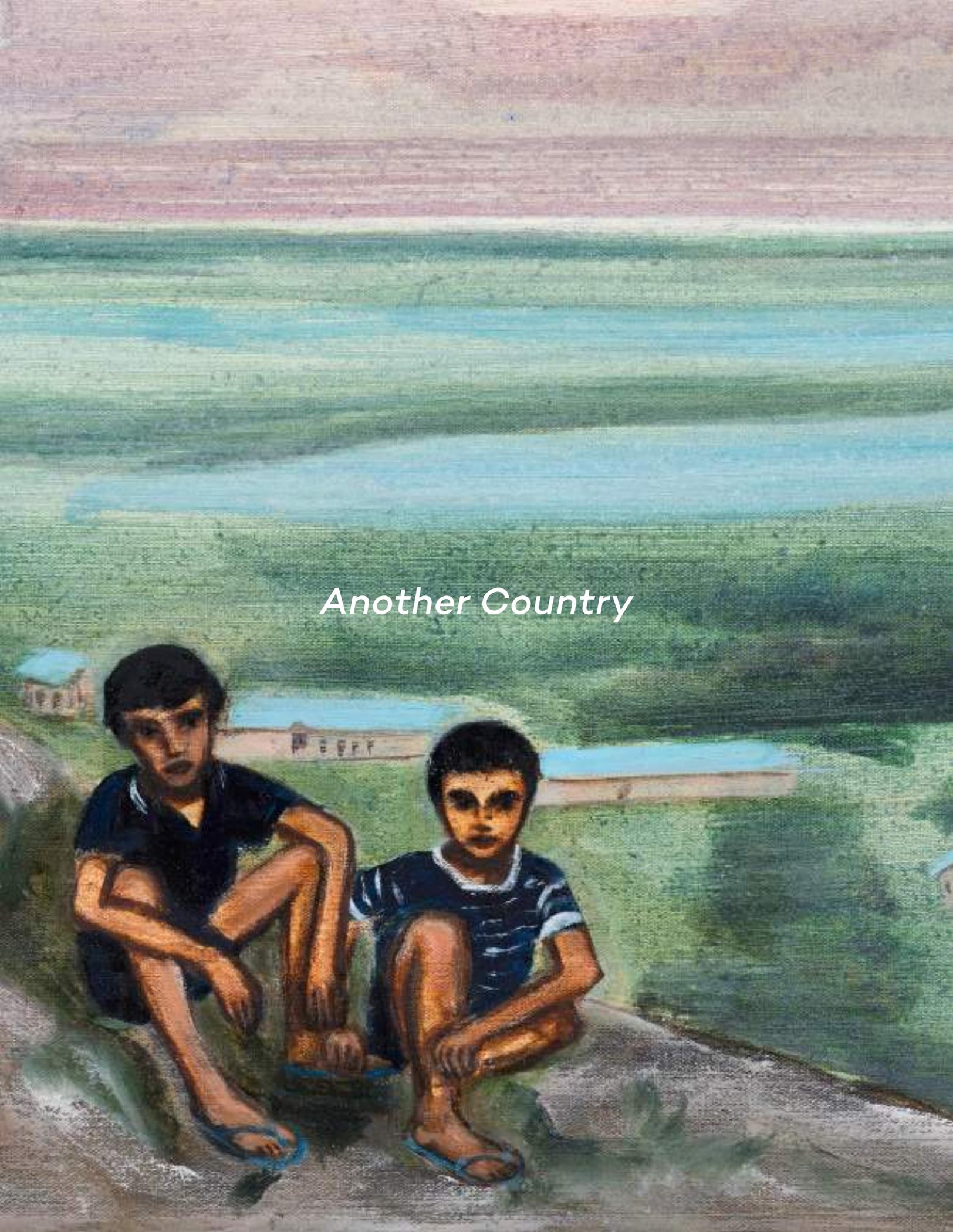
**Matthew Krishanu**

*Forest Scene*, 2022

Oil on canvas

17 ¾ x 23 ½ x 1 inches (45 x 60 x 2.5 cm)



A painting depicting two young boys sitting on a concrete ledge in the foreground. They are looking towards the viewer with serious expressions. The boy on the left is wearing a dark blue t-shirt and flip-flops, while the boy on the right is wearing a blue and white striped t-shirt and flip-flops. Behind them, a vast, green landscape unfolds, featuring a large body of water in the middle ground and several small buildings with blue roofs in the distance. The sky is a pale, hazy blue. The overall style is that of a textured oil or acrylic painting.

*Another Country*



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Boy on Boat*, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

17 ¾ x 23 ½ x 1 inches (45 x 60 x 2.5 cm)





**Matthew Krishanu**

*Boat*, 2018

Oil on canvas

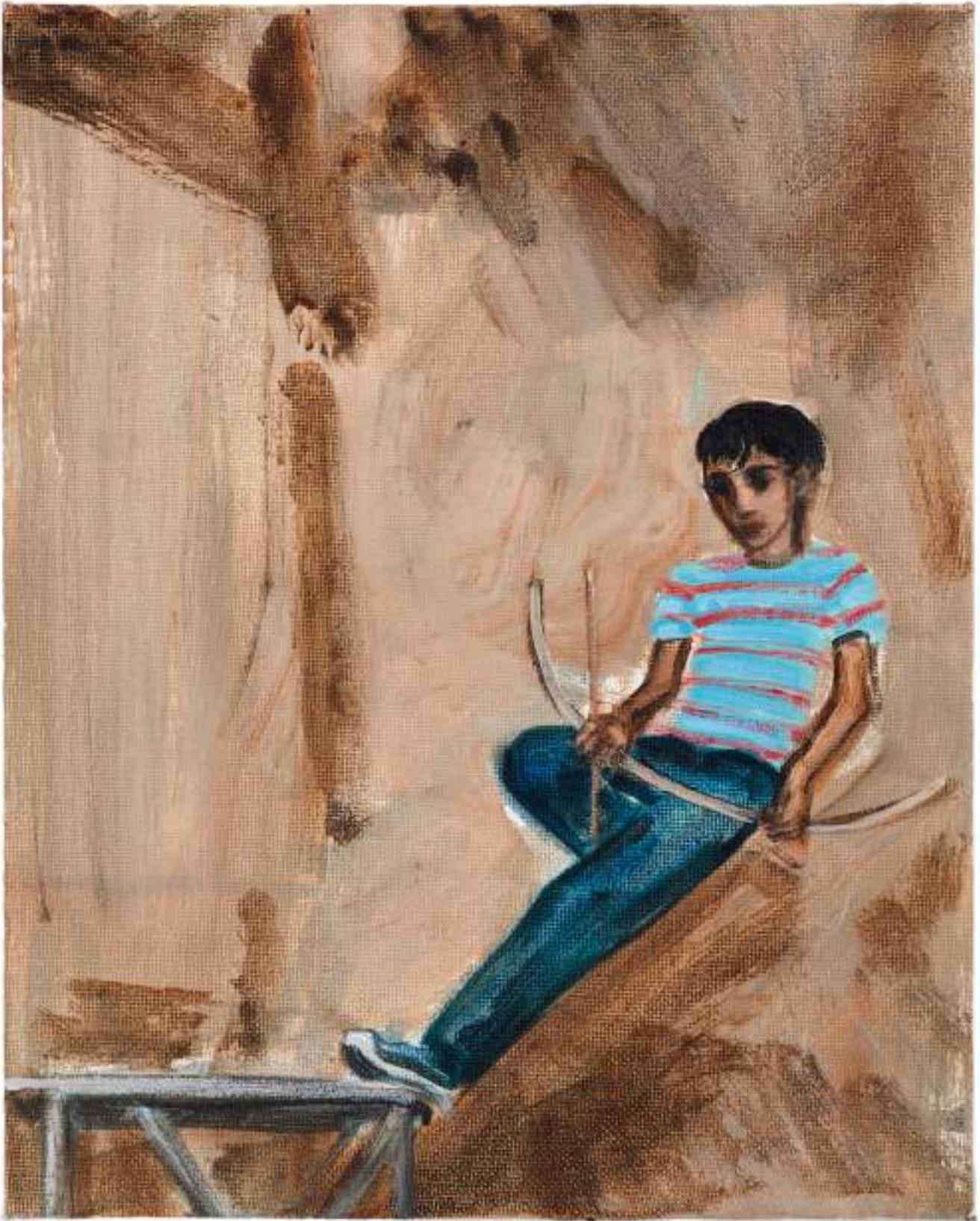
78 ¾ x 118 x 1 inches (200 x 300 x 2.5 cm)





**Installation view**

*Matthew Krishanu: Undercurrents*, LGDR, New York, NY  
April 7 - May 14, 2022

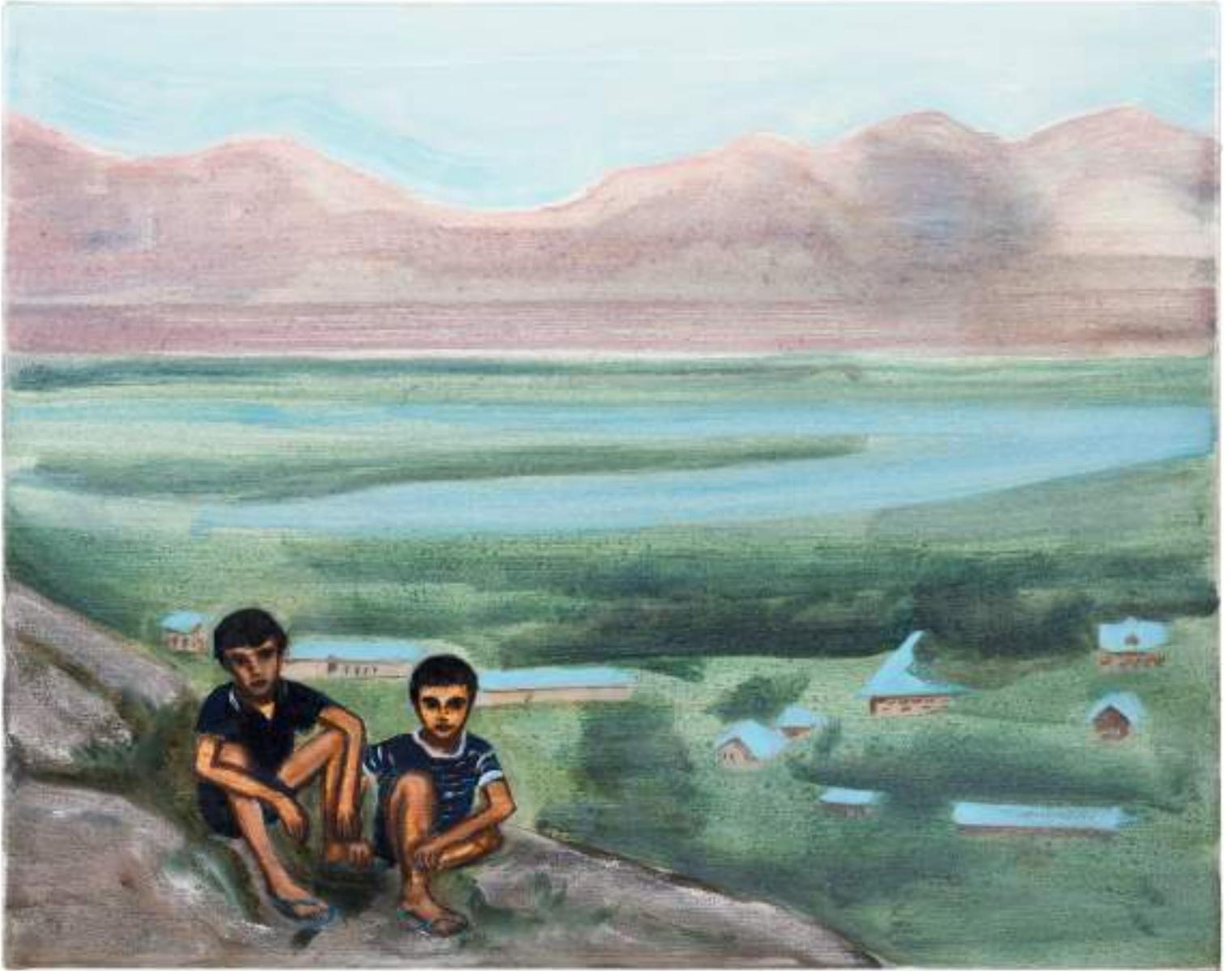


**Matthew Krishanu**

*Boy with Bow and Arrow*, 2021

Acrylic on board

10 x 8 x 1 inches (25 x 20 x 2.5 cm)



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Two Boys (Mountains, Kashmir)*, 2021

Oil on canvas

15 ¾ x 19 ¾ x 1 inches (40 x 50 x 2.5 cm)

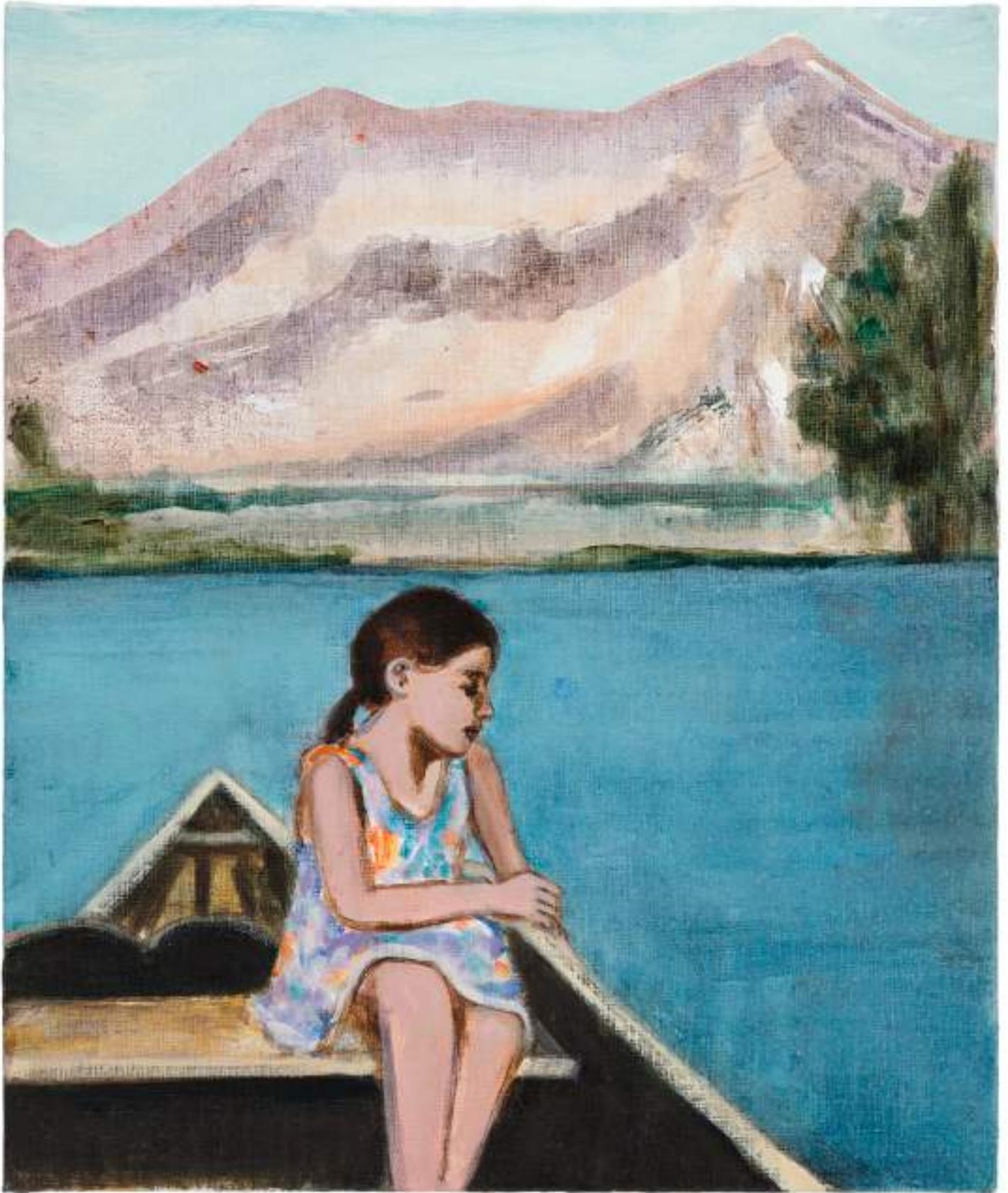


**Matthew Krishanu**

*Boy and River, 2022*

Acrylic on canvas

17 ¾ x 23 ½ x 1 inches (45 x 60 x 2.5 cm)



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Girl in Boat (Kashmir)*, 2021

Acrylic and oil on board

11  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 9  $\frac{3}{4}$  x 1 inches (30 x 25 x 2.5 cm)



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Kashmir (Two Girls)*, 2021

Oil on canvas

47 ¼ x 59 x 1 inches (120 x 150 x 2.5 cm)





**Installation view**

*Matthew Krishanu: Undercurrents*, LGDR, New York, NY  
April 7 - May 14, 2022



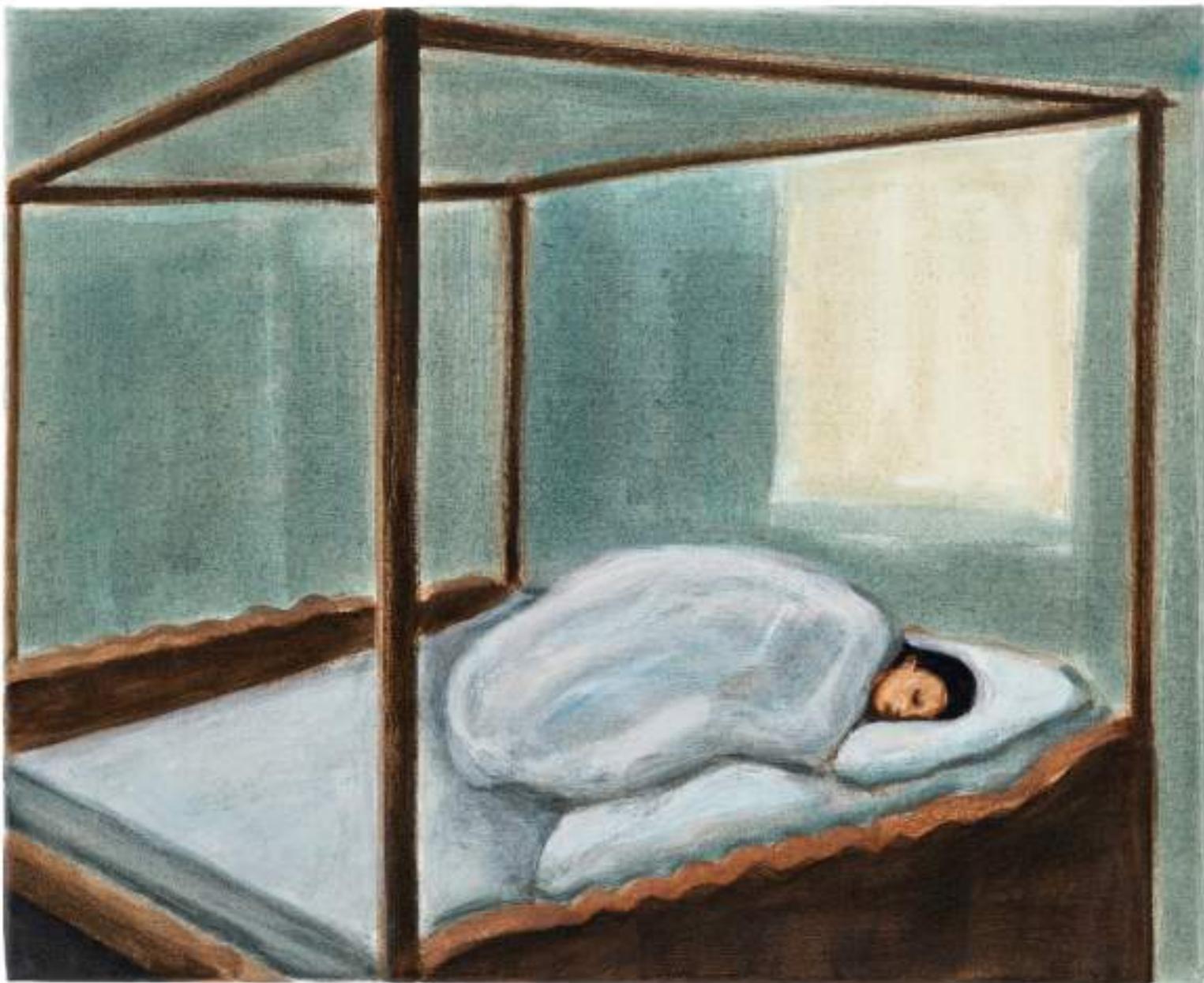
**Matthew Krishanu**

*Two Boys on Rocks*, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

15 ¾ x 19 ¾ x 1 inches (40 x 50 x 2.5 cm)





**Matthew Krishanu**

*Four Poster Bed*, 2022

Acrylic on canvas

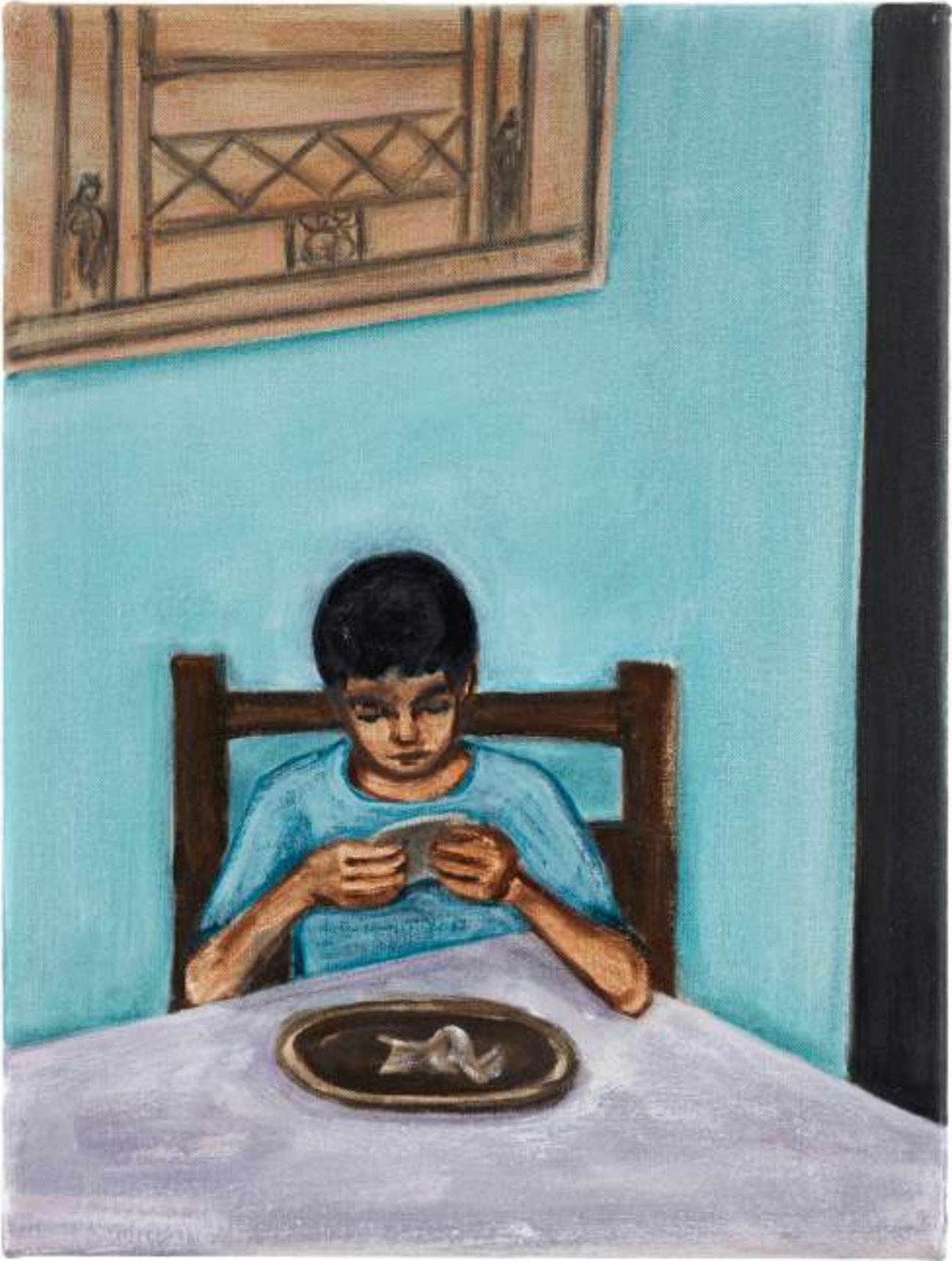
17 ¾ x 21 ½ x 1 inches (45 x 55 x 2.5 cm)





**Installation view**

*Matthew Krishanu: Undercurrents*, LGDR, New York, NY  
April 7 - May 14, 2022

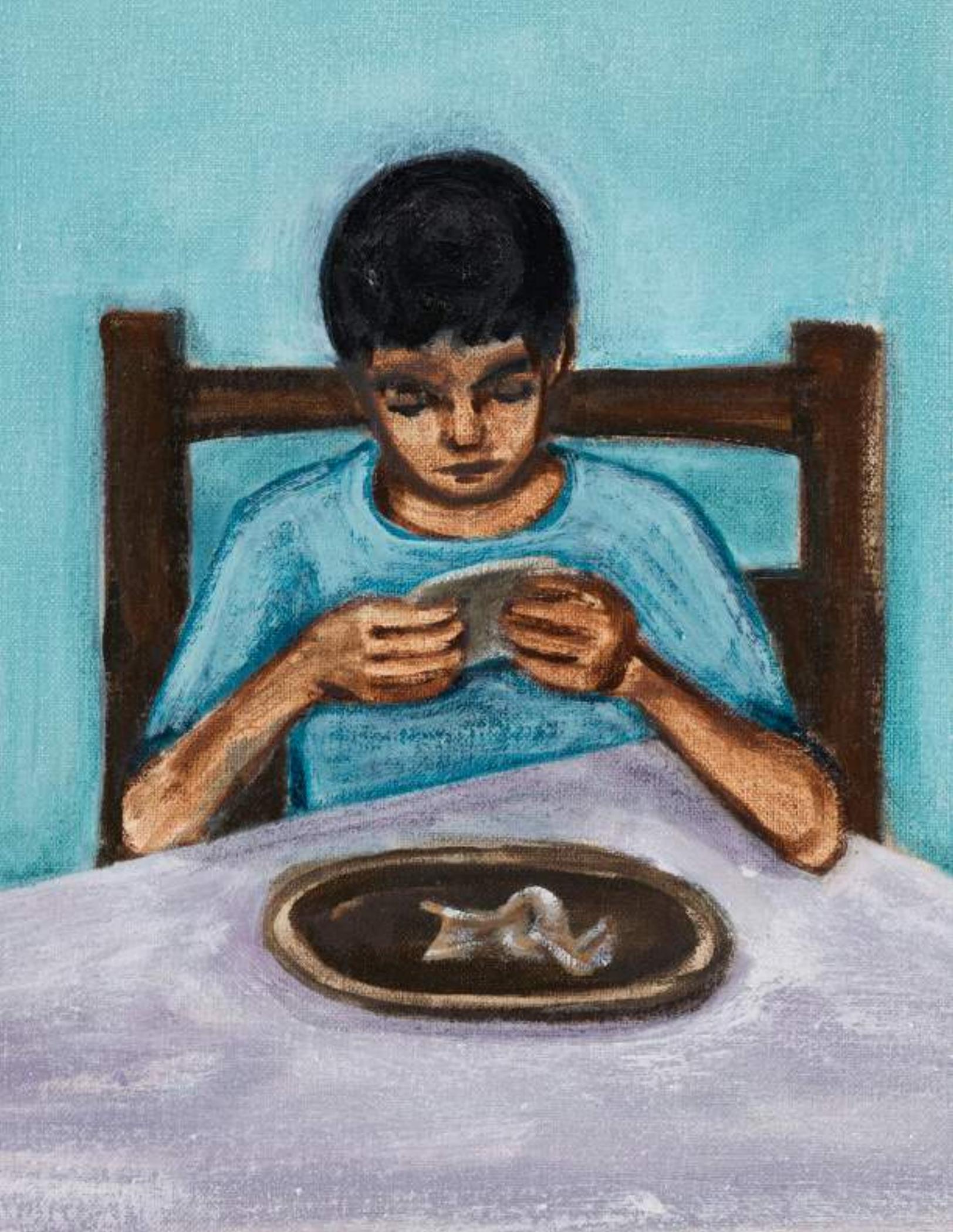


**Matthew Krishanu**

*Boy at Table*, 2022

Oil on canvas

15 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 11 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 1 inches (40 x 30 x 2.5 cm)





*Holy Family*



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Four Nuns*, 2020

Oil on canvas

70 ¾ x 55 x 1 ¾ inches (180 x 140 x 4.5 cm)

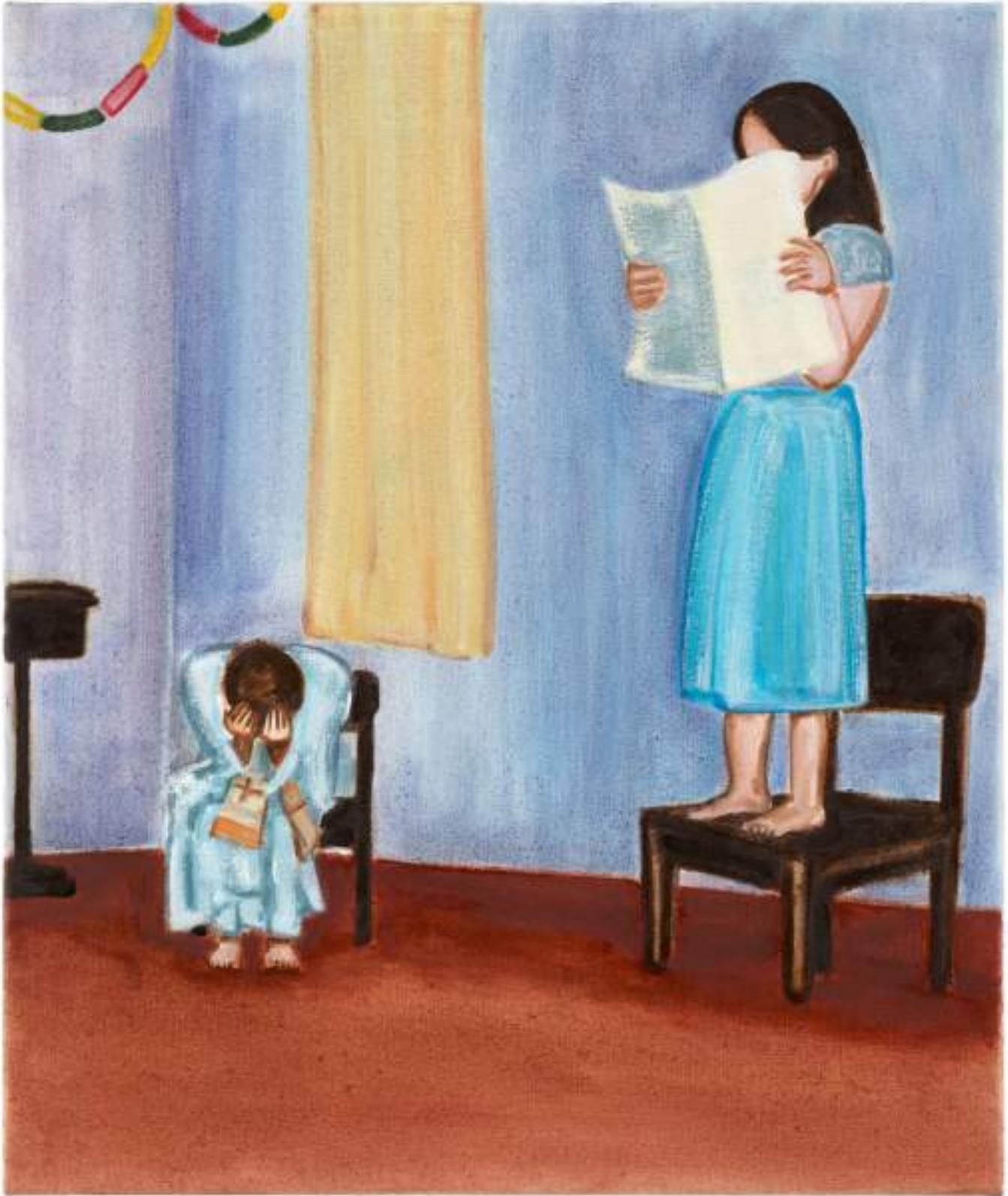


**Installation view**

*Matthew Krishanu: Undercurrents*, LGDR, New York, NY  
April 7 - May 14, 2022



*Mission*



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Girl Reading (with Priest)*, 2022

Oil on canvas

23 ½ x 19 ¾ x 1 inches (60 x 50 x 2.5 cm)





**Matthew Krishanu**

*Communion (Kneeling)*, 2022

Oil on canvas

21 ½ x 27 ½ x 1 inches (55 x 70 x 2.5 cm)





**Installation view**

*Matthew Krishanu: Undercurrents*, LGDR, New York, NY

April 7 - May 14, 2022



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Priest and Baby*, 2021

Oil on canvas

15 ¾ x 12 x 1 inches (40 x 30 x 2.5 cm)



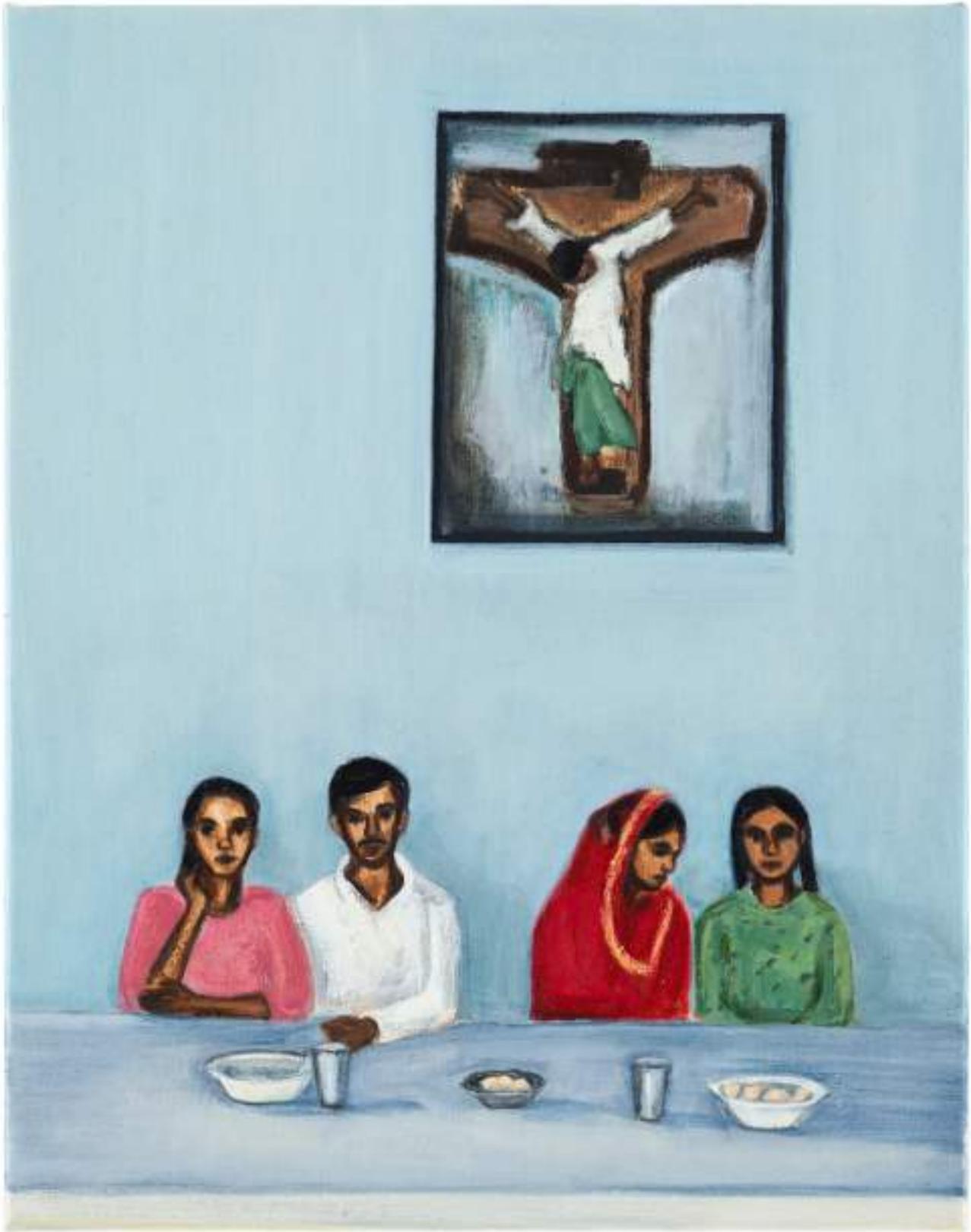


**Matthew Krishanu**

*Streamers (with painting)*, 2022

Oil on board

17 ¾ x 13 ¾ x 1 inches (45 x 35 x 2.5 cm)



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Four Figures (Crucifixion)*, 2021

Oil on canvas

19 ¾ x 15 ¾ x 1 inches (50 x 40 x 2.5 cm)



**Installation view**

*Matthew Krishanu: Undercurrents*, LGDR, New York, NY  
April 7 - May 14, 2022



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Preaching (Candles and Cross)*, 2020

Oil on board

15 ¾ x 19 ¾ x 1 inches (40 x 50 x 2.5 cm)





**Matthew Krishanu**

*Mission*, 2020

Oil on canvas

71 x 94 ½ x 1 inches (180 x 240 x 2.5 cm)

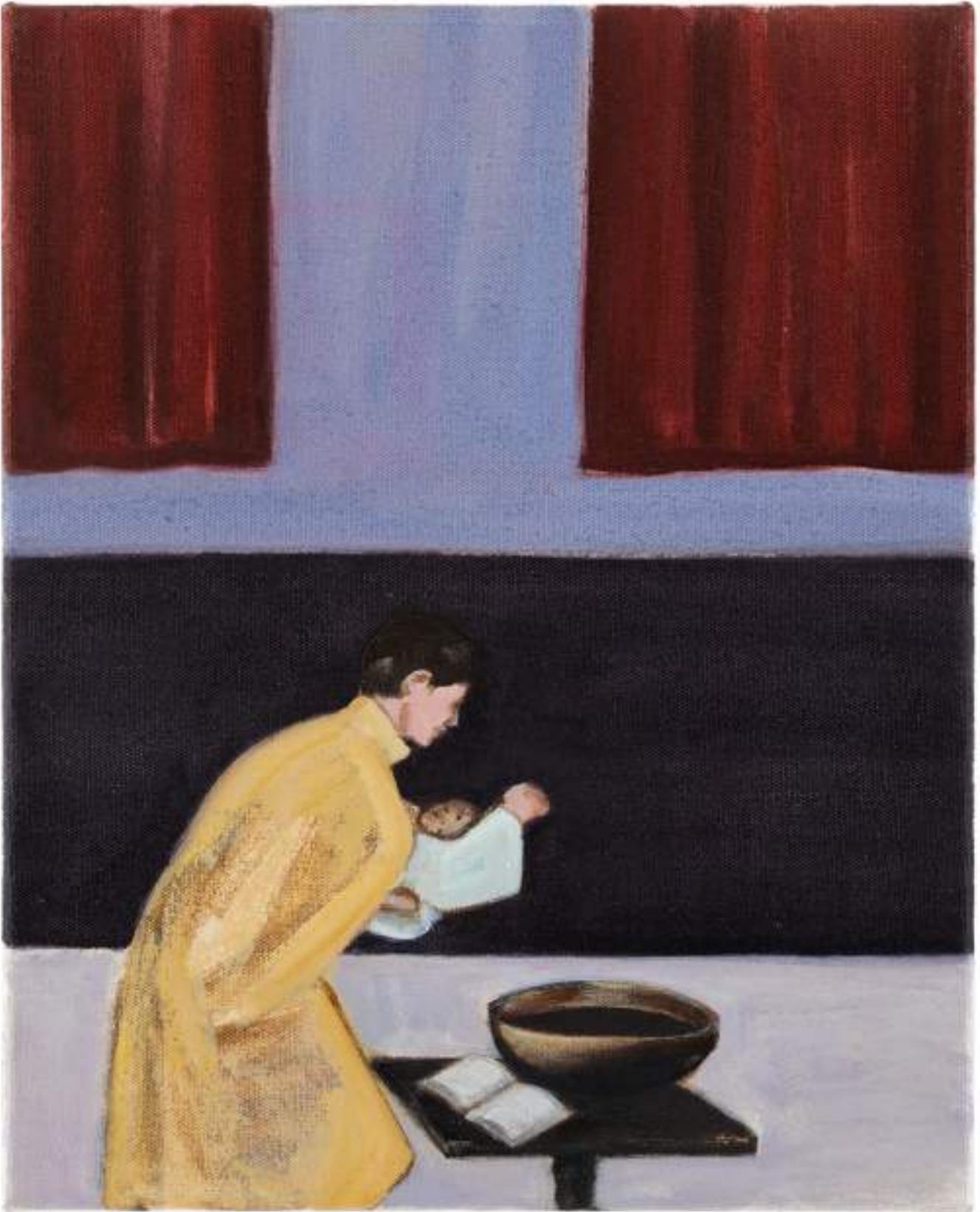




**Installation view**

*Matthew Krishanu: Undercurrents*, LGDR, New York, NY

April 7 - May 14, 2022



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Priest and Baby (Baptism)*, 2021

Oil on canvas

15 ¾ x 11 ¾ x 1 inches (40 x 30 x 2.5 cm)



**Installation view**

*Matthew Krishanu: Undercurrents*, LGDR, New York, NY  
April 7 - May 14, 2022



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Baptism (Priest and Baby with painting)*, 2020

Oil on canvas

15 ¾ x 12 x 1 inches (40 x 30 x 2.5 cm)





**Matthew Krishanu**

*Boy and Priest, 2022*

Oil on board

7 ¾ x 9 ¾ x 1 inches (20 x 25 x 2.5 cm)



*House of God*



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Open Door*, 2020

Oil on board

11 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub> x 10 x 1 inches (30 x 25 x 2.5 cm)

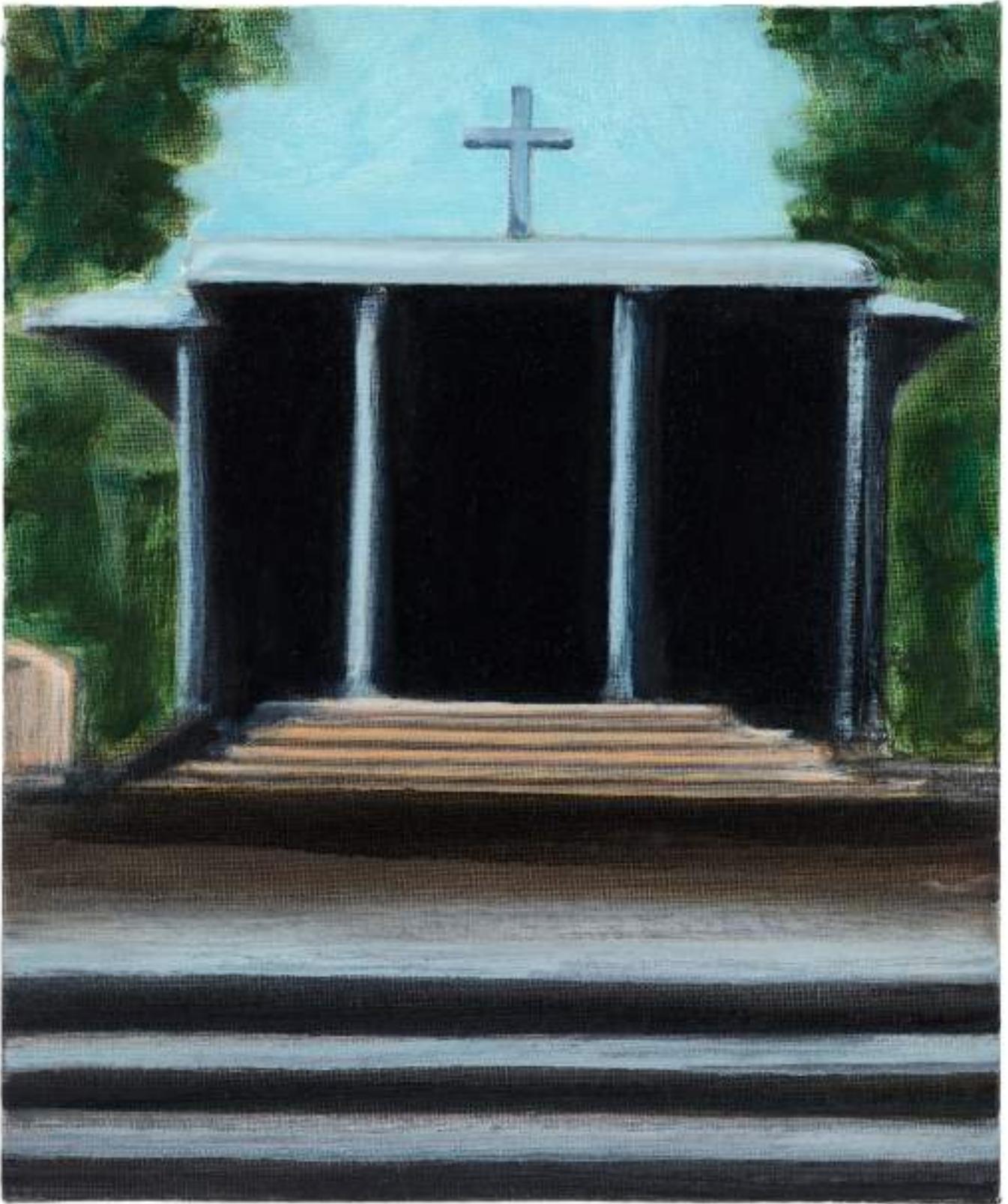


**Matthew Krishanu**

*Cross and Palm Tree, 2016*

Oil on board

15 3/4 x 11 3/4 x 1 inches (40 x 30 x 2.5 cm)



**Matthew Krishanu**

*Chapel*, 2021

Oil on board

11 ¾ x 10 x 1 inches (30 x 25 x 2.5 cm)



**Installation view**

*Matthew Krishanu: Undercurrents*, LGDR, New York, NY

April 7 - May 14, 2022