

Adam Lester

Shape I'm In

27 June – 15 July 2023

Steering a course between figuration and gestural interpretation, Adam Lester's observations of contemporary culture are brought to edgy resolution in his latest exhibition, *Shape I'm In*. Drawing inspiration from recent trips to Woodford Folk Festival and coloured by fading memories of early Big Day Out and Livid Festivals, Lester translates his contemporary experiences with a reflective nostalgia.

Painting is a notoriously solo-pursuit, and in these works Lester escapes and immerses himself into crowds of people. Sketching directly onto the canvas, the people are collaged from material gathered from various sources; memory, photographs, historical footage and earlier drawings. There is a dreamlike quality to his rendering and palette, unexpected colour combinations evoking the noise and energy of a crowd.

"For the past couple of years, my paintings have mostly been concerned with landscapes and man-made objects. This year I wanted to go back to making images of people again. The last few years I guess we've all felt somewhat detached from society, and the coming back into public and crowded situations felt strange, and slightly unnerving, albeit invigorating at the same time.

After spending a week at a music festival over the summer, I was really taken by the idea of painting crowds of people, like tableaus of the masses. Everyone jammed in together in this one place again, from many walks of life, differing political and religious persuasions, all of us sharing a good time. A momentary antidote to the uncertain times we've been living in.

The big thing I took away from the festival, of being out in the world again in a mass of people, is that tolerance and mercy are the key to transcending the pessimism, cynicism and bitterness of the uncertain times we've been living in. In the crowd at a concert, the feeling of camaraderie with us all jammed in together, is truly invigorating. That's the energy I'm trying to bring to life within these works."

– Adam Lester, 2023

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Shape I'm In is Adam Lester's eighth solo exhibition at Jan Murphy Gallery. Lester has taken first prize in the Bentley Art Prize, twice been highly commended in the Southern Cross Art Prize, and twice selected for inclusion in the Churchie Emerging Art Prize exhibition. His work is held in significant public collections including Artbank and Parliament House Art Collection, along with private collections in Australia and Internationally.