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Dexter Dalwood's Contemplative New Show Will Make You Stop, Think,  
and Appreciate Painting

"It's like standing still while everything else rushes past you," the venerable British artist tells artnet News.



Dexter Dalwood, *ON AIR* (2018). Courtesy of Simon Lee.

"Life moves pretty fast," a wise man once said. "If you don't stop and look around once in a while, you could miss it."

You don't have to tell [Dexter Dalwood](#) this. It's been on the British artist's mind a great deal lately, informing the paintings in his newest exhibition, "[What is Really Happening](#)", on view now at [Simon Lee](#)'s London location.

Each of Dalwood's canvases depicts a solitary moment in a small, quiet space: a dark car interior, a plaintive pink bathtub, a moonlit bedroom after midnight. In many cases, the stillness of the scene is emphasized through a peek into a frenzied environment nearby—a rainstorm shown through a streaked windshield, for instance, or a doorway opening to a glowing red recording studio with a drum set.



Dexter Dalwood, *Hard* (2018). Courtesy of Simon Lee.

"I was thinking, 'Where can we find moments of solitude, moments when we can be disconnected from the anxieties of the every day and have the time to think internally about what's going on with your life?'" the artist tells artnet News. "Often, I find, this happens when I'm traveling. Air travel, in particular, when there's no wifi connection—that's when I find this delicious period of time when you can just sit and think."

Dalwood's scenes appear at once familiar and strangely foreign, full of objects we see every day, but never actually observe. They're the things you stare at blankly when you're thinking deeply about something else.

"I think that's what fascinated me—trying to make images that occupy your visual field, but aren't necessarily what you're thinking about when you're looking at them," he says. "It's like when you're looking at the back of a headrest in a place—although that's in your visual field, it's not necessarily what's going on inside your head."



Dexter Dalwood, *Fire in a Limo* (2018). Courtesy of Simon Lee.

Choosing these overlooked objects, the venerable artist aims to engender the opposite effect—creating imagery that, as he says, connects with the viewer to the point “where, for just a nano-second, they can look at something and not just consume it. In that moment they are thinking about what they’re looking at in front of them.”

For Dalwood, the anxiety of time rushing past is mirrored by the art world’s own anxiety over the state of painting, a slow medium in a world that’s growing faster by the day. It’s a concern that’s long been at the core of his practice. It’s also why, despite the show’s rainy, nighttime scenes and gloomy interiors, he actually sees it as being quite hopeful.



Dexter Dalwood, *Coming Down* (2018). Courtesy of Simon Lee.

“The idea of being alone with yourself still seems to be a valuable and hopeful thing to me,” he says. “It’s like standing still while everything else rushes past you. I suppose I’m optimistic about painting still existing as a thing to stand in front of in 2019. That’s life-affirming to me.”