

Anna Calleja holds solo exhibition in London

Each image emerges from the artist's ongoing personal archive, real and imagined

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A solo exhibition by Maltese artist Anna Calleja in London brings together small-scale paintings on panel and paper that operate like visual notations: tender, diaristic and rich with references. Each image emerges from the artist's ongoing personal archive, real and imagined.

Calleja positions the female experience at the centre of it all, reframing narrative tropes and archetypes from the history of figurative painting.

Created over the past year, *The Air is Thick with Dust and Dawn* is rooted in a place that Calleja has inhabited, even briefly, during an extended period of great change. The title reflects this time of transition – an unsettled atmosphere, the air thick with dust but also shot through with possibility.

Malta's skyline has been changed beyond recognition. Each horizon and sunset are laden with the implication of ongoing loss, as each day brings a new crane and a new building rising. Against this fast-moving backdrop, Calleja's paintings hold on to time, resisting change for a moment longer, meditating on and grieving the present.



Her process is meticulous and compulsive; working *alla prima*, Calleja pushes and pulls paint across smoothly sanded panels. Because the paint is applied in one thin layer, it often forces her to work through the night in a marathon sprint against the rapidly drying paint.

The result is a uniquely luminous surface that achieves a delicately translucent balance between paint and the ground beneath.

The painting titles pull from Calleja's journaling practice and cite writers such as Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, Margaret Atwood and Sappho, echoing her interest in how language animates images.

The Air is Thick with Dust and Dawn bridges opposing forces: tenderness and aggression, grief and fear, intimacy and uncertainty, destruction and possibility. The 19 new works capture fragments of a life lived in transition, paintings that breathe with the air of change, holding both the quiet of still rooms and the weather of storms outside.

The exhibition is on until November 14 at Lyndsey Ingram, 20, Bourdon Street, London W1K 3PJ.