

# OFFER WATERMAN

## PRESS RELEASE

Diarmuid Kelley: *summer, autumn, winter & spring*

Offer Waterman, 17 St George Street, London, W1S 1FJ, UK

Friday 28 March – Wednesday 30 April 2025



*British People in Hot Weather, 2024, oil on linen, 40.6 by 40.6 cm & Flash Gordon Conquers the Universe, 2024, oil on linen, 152.4 by 152.4 cm*

Offer Waterman is pleased to announce *summer, autumn, winter & spring*, a solo exhibition of twenty new paintings by artist Diarmuid Kelley. A previous finalist for the BP Portrait Award and acclaimed for his portraits including HRH the Duchess of Cornwall, this will be Kelley's tenth exhibition with the gallery and follows his sell-out show in New York at the end of 2019. Best known for his distinctive, almost cinematic approach to the staging and composition of his portraits and still life scenes, Kelley's work evokes the effect of light falling on his subjects. His most recent paintings reveal his increasing fascination with describing the surface of things.

Kelley paints only from life, inviting his subjects to sit regularly over a period of months in a specially created 'light chamber' inspired by the 18<sup>th</sup> century painter Joseph Wright of Derby. The construction allows Kelley to control the effect of natural light on a subject and experiment with chiaroscuro. In a series of highly ambitious, large-scale portraits of Kelley's regular sitters Bea and Max, the figure becomes part of a more complex tableau, in which the pattern of the Persian rug, or texture of a battered velvet chair, are as vividly described as the model's luminous skin and hair. Inspired by the paintings of Ingres, Kelley revels in the depiction of fabrics - velvet, linen, damask, ermine – the precise character of each material instantly recognisable and visually remarkable.

*"If you spend your life looking at objects, you become obsessed with the patina, with the roughness or smoothness, with the touch and the feel of things. You want them to somehow feel palpable. I don't consciously think about trying to describe things like that. It just happens as if by magic ... and it's magical when it does."*

Kelley's still lifes offer him greater opportunity for experimentation. In the past, these smaller works "were mostly about colour and tone"; the placement of a few select objects became the vehicle through which to explore colour in an abstract way. As with his portraits, Kelley has become increasingly interested in capturing the surface texture of these objects - the crumbling glaze on a terracotta jug or the familiar powdery bloom of a tulip leaf.

# OFFER WATERMAN

A signature of Kelley's work is to leave some areas of his canvases unpainted, a device which draws the eye more emphatically to the painted parts of the image, inviting the viewer to experience the attentions of the artist as he captures his sitter. The presence of unprimed linen foregrounds the viewer's sense of the painting as a physical object. He explains, *"I want to introduce every reminder that this is only an image, even while, at the same time, I'm trying to capture a real truth, a sense of an object as palpably real"*.

The exhibition is accompanied by a fully illustrated catalogue, which includes an interview with the artist by Rachel Campbell Johnston. A short film of Kelley working in his studio, directed by Sal Redpath, will be released to coincide with the show and will be available on the gallery's website.

---

## NOTES TO EDITORS:

Offer Waterman Gallery, 17 St George Street, London, W1S 1FJ, UK

Exhibition Dates: Friday 28 March – Wednesday 30 April 2025

*(Closed on Good Friday and Easter Saturday)*

Exhibition Hours: Tuesday – Friday, 11am–5pm, Saturdays 11am–4pm

## PRESS ENQUIRIES

Fiona Russell at Rees & Co

[fiona.russell@reesandco.com](mailto:fiona.russell@reesandco.com) +44 (0)7917 130 801

## ABOUT DIARMUID KELLEY

Born in Stirling, Scotland in 1972, Diarmuid Kelley grew up in the north of England. He studied Fine Art at Newcastle University, graduating in 1995. He was the youngest artist ever to win the prestigious Nat West Art Prize at the age of 23 and later completed a Masters at Chelsea College of Art.

Kelley has been represented by Offer Waterman since 1998. This will be his tenth solo exhibition with the gallery, the last was held in New York in 2019. An exceptional painter of people, he has been commissioned to paint Dame Anne Owers for the National Portrait Gallery; Sir Richard Thompson for the Royal College of Physicians; and HRH the Duchess of Cornwall and The Duke of Devonshire for their private collections.

Instagram [@diarmuidkelleymustdie](https://www.instagram.com/diarmuidkelleymustdie)

## ABOUT OFFER WATERMAN

Offer Waterman has been dealing in 20th Century and Contemporary Art for over thirty years. Based in a five-storey Georgian townhouse in central London, the former home of the William Morris Company showroom, the gallery presents a programme of historic and contemporary exhibitions and works closely with institutions and individuals to advise on building distinguished collections. Recent exhibitions include *On Foot*, (2023), curated by fashion designer Jonathan Anderson and *Frank Auerbach: Portraits of London* (2024) in association with Francis Outred, which attracted over 5,000 visitors. Offer Waterman has supported exhibitions at numerous institutions, including Tate, The Royal Academy, The Hepworth Wakefield, Pallant House Gallery, The Courtauld and Kettle's Yard.

[www.waterman.co.uk](http://www.waterman.co.uk)

Instagram [@offerwaterman](https://www.instagram.com/offerwaterman)