

For Immediate Release

## ORA-ORA PRESENTS STEPHEN THORPE SOLO EXHIBITION *SEMI-CONSCIOUS*



Stephen Thorpe, *Semiconscious*, Oil on canvas, x cm (Courtesy of Ora-Ora and the artist)

**HONG KONG – November 4, 2020** Ora-Ora is excited to present *Semi-conscious*, British artist Stephen Thorpe's first exhibition at the gallery. The exhibition features all new work created over the past few months, drawing on the artist's latest series of paintings that take corners and arcades as their focal point. *Semi-conscious* opens on Friday 27 November, 2020 during the much anticipated art week this autumn.

Semi-conscious denotes a state of being that is only partially conscious, the space between full conscious awareness and unconscious existence discovered only through personal introspection, dreams, memories, repressed feelings, automatic reactions and the confrontation of hidden phobias and desires. Even though unconscious elements of one's psyche exist well under the surface of consciousness, they are theorized to exert an impact on

behavior, thoughts and visual associations and can come to the fore through creative output. The paintings on show in *Semi-conscious* demonstrate this delicate state, that within the artist's own mind but also as part of the wider "collective unconscious" (the collective experience of cultures or mankind) as a statement on the world of limbo we find ourselves in, whether through social isolation brought on by COVID-19 or through dependence on digital technology and escapism from reality.

Known for his paintings of interior spaces, Thorpe's work is influenced by psychoanalysis, sociology, folklore, mythology and the reality of myth. His paintings are visual representations of "psychological interiors", or in basic terms, the rooms are the mind. Thorpe uses psychoanalytical techniques to gain access and insights into his unconscious to understand its underlying forces, influences and the symbols embedded there, all of which manifest in the paintings. While taking his own unconscious as a starting point, the work is a vehicle – through subliminal symbolism, color associations or even the familiar aspects of the home – to examine the deeper recesses of the mind and encourage others to court their own unconscious.



Stephen Thorpe, *The Truth is One and the Same Everywhere*, Oil on canvas, x cm (Courtesy of Ora-Ora and the artist)

The exhibition features a new series of paintings that focus on corners, representing the exact meeting place of inside/outside, interior/exterior, unconsciousness/consciousness. They are the manifestation of semi-consciousness or the space in between. The corner paintings also represent an important element in Thorpe's work, that of "duality", the meeting of the

unconscious mind with the conscious mind and the subsequent process of integration. This polarity can be seen through the balance of texture – thickly applied, unctuous layers of paint, juxtaposed with soft, sensitively controlled brushstrokes – to the mixture of abstract and representative elements; the relationship between subject and surface; and formal linear perspective at odds with labyrinthine layering.

Arcades have been instinctively appearing in Thorpe's work since 2018, at first revealing themselves as hidden and in the background, but here taking center stage and assuming a new level of importance in the show. Initially understood as self-portraits due to their human-like proportions, further reflection suggests that the arcades represent the broader context of contemporary life and the nature of existence. A sign of our times, the arcades express something for the collective that address a universal sense of "emptiness", that semi-conscious state of being where life can feel like a video game on repeat, trying stay alive and not be consumed, only to start all over again. They stand for the addiction to external stimuli for those who have not yet found meaning within themselves and offer an alternative channel or gateway for internal introspection in a world full of distractions.

#### **ABOUT STEPHEN THORPE**

Stephen Thorpe (b. 1981, Margate, UK) currently lives and works in Hong Kong. Thorpe received his MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art in London and is currently a Professor of Painting at the Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD). He has been the recipient of numerous prizes, including the Basil H. Alkazzi Foundation Scholarship; Saatchi's Showdown Prize, judged by Kristine Roepstorff and Matthias Weisher; prize winner of 3rd Ward Open Call, Brooklyn, New York; and the Royal Scottish Academy's The Skinny Award. His work is included in prominent private and museum collections and has been featured in solo and group exhibitions around the world at venues including Denny Dimin Gallery, New York (online); Saatchi Gallery, London; Copeland Gallery, London; Summerhall, Edinburgh; the Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh; and Aberdeen Art Gallery, Aberdeen, amongst others. He sits on the Selection Committee for the Basil H. Alkazzi Scholarship Award and the Ali H. Alkazzi Scholarship at the Royal College of Art, as well as the Outstanding Student Award in Hong Kong.

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**About Ora-Ora**

Ora-Ora began in Hong Kong in 2006, with globally-sourced artists who are thought-driven innovators. Our artists interpret history and philosophy to bring new perspectives to our modern world and the lively dialogues between east and west. Recognized for our support of Asian contemporary art, we have grown to represent artists from Asia, Europe and the US across a variety of media. Dr. Henrietta Tsui-Leung, co-founder of Ora-Ora, is also co-founder of the Hong Kong Art Gallery Association, which builds connections and opportunities in the growing Hong Kong art industry. The gallery continues to develop alliances and partnerships with institutions globally to enable discovery of our artists in fresh environments. From our base in Hong Kong, we travel regularly to meet our clients at global art fairs and our international exhibitions.