

## JASON HERR, PIETER JENNES and JAMES OWENS

### *Wayward*

February 7 — March 13, 2025

Untamed and unbound, the works in *Wayward* trace the contours of restless imaginations, where worlds emerge not from order but from the riotous convergence of instinct, memory, and form. For **Jason Herr**, **Pieter Jennes** and **James Owens**, the act of creation becomes a venture into the wild—a place where stories defy logic, characters shift and distort, and nature itself becomes both a muse and a mirror. This is an exhibition that lives on the edges, celebrating the errant paths and untamed territories of artistic vision.

The word “wayward” refers to something or someone that is difficult to control or predict. This rebellious nature runs deep in the distinct approaches of the three artists in *Wayward*. They weave complex, unruly narratives that dissolve boundaries between the real and the imagined. Their practices traverse the surreal, the liminal, and the theatrical, offering viewers a glimpse into universes that are as wild as they are meticulously crafted.

Jason Herr's work delves into the subconscious, crafting layered, dreamlike narratives through graphite, colored pencil, watercolor, and collage. His compositions explore the fragility of existence and the duality of human experience, often inspired by liminal states such as near-death encounters. Figures in his pieces are stretched and contorted, placed in surreal scenarios that balance humor with disquiet. Through these distorted forms, Herr examines the instability of perception and the vulnerability of consciousness.

In *Off Leash*, Herr captures a moment of tension through an exaggerated low-angle view, emphasizing the elongated limbs and expressive face of a dog in motion. A human figure, positioned behind the dog, uses one leg to anchor or restrain the animal, symbolizing a struggle to regain control over chaos. This dynamic interaction, set against a fragmented and surreal background, reflects Herr's broader exploration of taming the untethered and navigating the absurd. His figures, often seen as masked self-portraits, traverse alternate realities where the boundaries of reality and the subconscious blur, forming a deeply introspective world.

James Owens brings the untamed vitality of nature to life in his paintings, where flora and fauna intertwine in a delicate interplay of growth and decay. His oeuvre, a hybrid of figuration and abstraction, constructs imagined ecosystems that pulse with tension and vitality. In Owens's works, tendrils curl and stretch, blossoms emerge and wither, and figures engage in ambiguous rituals that oscillate between calm observation and energetic presence. In *Off the Beaten Track*, Owens reframes Romantic ideals often associated with pastoral landscapes, filtering them through a distinctly contemporary lens. The painting presents a dynamic composition of tangled, plant-like forms and organic shapes, grounded by a background vignette of rural houses enclosed within a green, oval-shaped frame. Silhouetted figures, whether fragmented, grouped, or fully realized, are dispersed throughout the scene, imbuing the composition with layers of narrative possibility.

Earthy tones dominate the palette, evoking a nostalgic connection to early surrealism and the painting styles of certain Bloomsbury Group artists, who similarly balanced decorative aesthetics with emotional

resonance. Owens's mastery lies in his ability to capture a state of perpetual flux, inviting viewers into a suspended world where life's fragility and resilience coexist in delicate harmony. *Off the Beaten Track* becomes both a celebration of nature's cycles and a meditation on the interdependence of human and non-human realms. The painting offers no definitive answers, only an open invitation to explore spaces caught in a perpetual state of becoming.

Pieter Jennes captures the peculiar theatricality of the everyday, transforming ordinary encounters into scenes of vibrant intrigue. Drawing on art-historical references ranging from Islamic miniatures to the satirical works of Georg Grosz, Jennes creates densely textured compositions where humans, objects, and animals coexist in narratives infused with humor and mystery. Richly patterned surfaces and playful storytelling reflect the artist's fascination with the lives of strangers, often as if glimpsed through windows into fleeting, imagined interactions.

In his work *The Date*, one such imagined encounter unfolds: two characters fervently embrace in a kiss, caught in a moment of passion. The scene is framed by painted curtains in soft purple and white stripes, evoking the impression of peering into a private moment through a window or stage. This theatrical framing heightens the sense of voyeurism, inviting viewers to become complicit observers. On the window ledge, a small black cat with flames adds a whimsical, surreal detail, evoking mystery and hints of superstition. Jennes's works oscillate between vulnerability and voyeurism, at once intimate and surreal. They expand into narratives that celebrate the unpredictable nature of human behavior, embedding it within a rich, symbolic world that is as playful as it is enigmatic.

*Wayward* is a celebration of the wild forces that drive creation—forces that reject order and convention in favor of freedom and exploration. Here, the imagination roams untethered, crafting stories that challenge our understanding of the world and ourselves. As viewers step into these untamed universes, they are invited to lose themselves in the uncharted and the unexpected, where the boundaries between artist, subject, and observer dissolve, leaving only the raw, exhilarating energy of the wayward.

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**Jason Herr** (b. 1977 in Lancaster, Pennsylvania) graduated with a BFA from the Pennsylvania College of Art and Design in 2016. His work has been part of numerous exhibitions in the US and Europe. Some of his recent exhibitions include *A Solitary Loop*, Pennsylvania College of Art and Design, Pennsylvania (2023, solo); *Snakes in the Grass*, Newchild, Antwerp (2023); *Idle Times: Pop Disorder*, Current Space, Baltimore (2023); *Le Dessin*, Halle Saint Pierre, Paris (2022); among others. He has contributed illustration work for Mondo Zero Press, Kus! Comics, Lifted Brow Magazine, and Future Islands. The artist lives and works in Lancaster, Pennsylvania.

**Pieter Jennes** (b. 1990 in Mortsel, Belgium). Recent solo and group exhibitions include *Bird Tales*, Nino Mier, New York (2024, solo); *Frieze Seoul*, Gallery Vacancy (2023, solo); *When weeds bloom*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles (2022, solo); *I can tell you stories*, Gallery Sofie Van de Velde, Antwerp (2021, solo); *Vacation II*, Gallery Vacancy, Shanghai (2022); *Rewilding*, Nino Mier Gallery, Los Angeles (2021); *Danser Brut*, Bozar, Brussels (2020); *NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT*, PUBLIC Gallery, London (2020); among others. He lives and works in Antwerp.

**James Owens** (born in 1995 in Middlesbrough, UK) received a BA in Illustration from Camberwell College of Arts. Recent solo and group exhibitions include *Rooted*, Berntson Bhattacharjee, London (2024); *Out of Earth*, The Approach, London (2024); *Disembodied*, Nicodim Gallery, Los Angeles (2024); *Once, Then, Gone*, Newchild, Antwerp (2023); *It's All Good, Setareh*, Düsseldorf (2023, solo); *Hawthorn and the Feast of Julian*, Arusha Gallery, New York (2023); *A New Sensation*, Galerie Marguo, Paris (2023); *The Moth and the Thunderclap*, Stuart Shave Modern Art, London (2023); among others. Owens has been shortlisted for the Evening Standard Prize (2018). The artist lives and works in London.

***Wayward* is on view from February 7, to March 13, 2025. Opening hours are Wednesday through Saturday from 13:00 to 18:00 hrs.**