

OLLMAN, LEAH, AUGUSTUS THOMPSON PAINTS LIFE PASSING BY WITH ELEGIAC MYSTERY, LOS ANGELES TIMES, JUNE 10, 2019

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# Augustus Thompson paints life passing by with elegiac mystery

By LEAH OLLMAN

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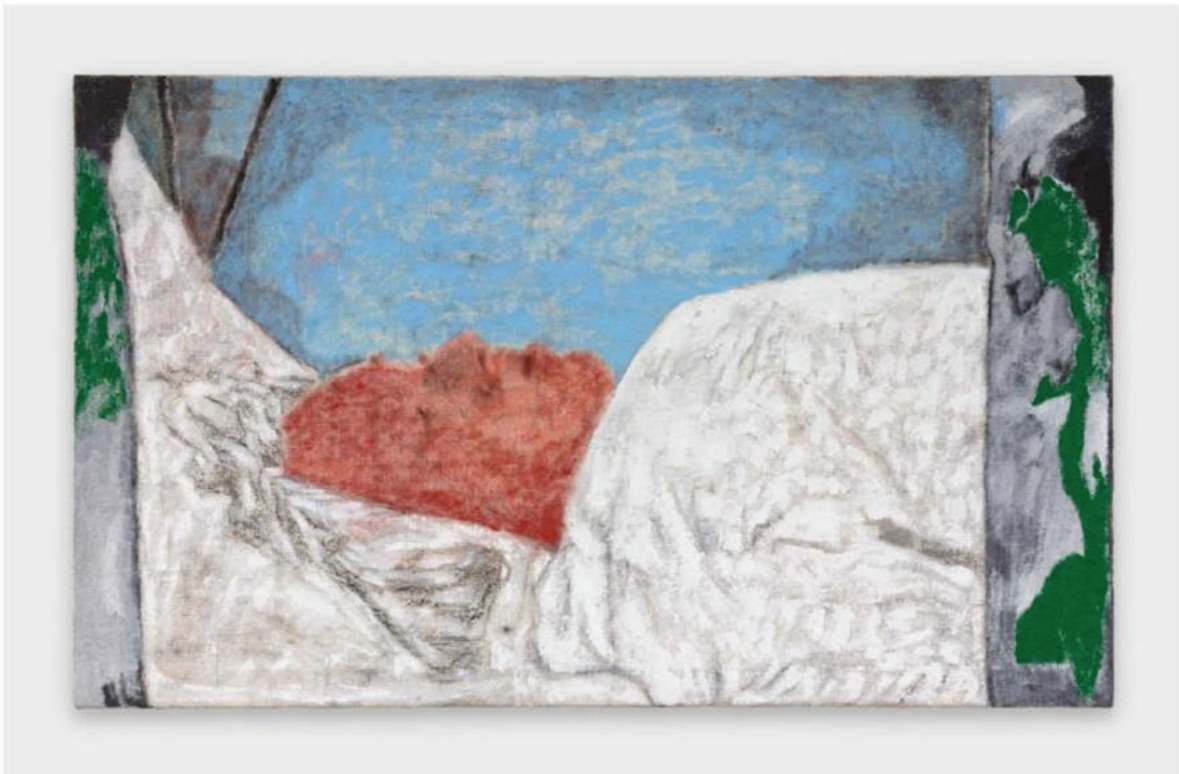
"The Exposure of All Things Before Me" by Augustus Thompson," 2018-19. Oil, colored pencil and carbon transfer on linen, 53 inches by 72 inches. (From Praz-Delavallade Los Angeles)

“The Exposure of All Things Before Me,” one of the most stirring paintings in Augustus Thompson's show at Praz-Delavallade Los Angeles, features a chalky-white figure lying along its bottom edge.

His form is translucent, porous to light. The space above him is black, and hung, as it were, with an assortment of smaller images, some of them miniatures of other works in the show. As surrogate of the artist, the figure here comes across as Thompson himself does throughout the gallery — as a contemplative, absorbent witness, assembling an archive of sensations, impressions, memories.

Thompson works in a range of media, including sculpture, photography and sound. This show is confined to recent paintings and works on paper, but even within these parameters, the L.A. artist's exploratory approach to materials is evident. His canvases incorporate pencil, colored pencil, carbon transfer and charcoal, along with casein and oil paint. Layering and varying degrees of opacity give the works a sense of temporal texture and load the indeterminate with emotional heft.

Thompson's methods suit evocations of death and mortality especially well. "M" could represent a person sleeping but also could pass for a death portrait. Thompson brushes the face, seen close up and enclosed by white, in patchy stabs of red. The pigment covers sporadically, and where the paint is thin, the raw linen's weave is not just visible but pronounced, as if flesh and presence were eroding before our eyes.



"M" by Augustus Thompson, 2019. Oil, charcoal and pencil on linen, 27.75 inches by 45.5 inches (From Praz-Delavallade Los Angeles)

Another utterly compelling canvas bears similarity in composition to "The Exposure," only rotated 90 degrees, so the reclining figure, here in emerald, appears upright against the left edge, and blackness fills the space before him.



"Passing of a Gardener, Passing of a Politician, Passing of Lou Reed, Passing of a Model" by Augustus Thompson, 2017-19. Oil on canvas, 65 inches by 52 inches. (Praz-Delavallade Los Angeles)

Wedges of blue in the right top and bottom corners reinforce the notion that this too is a sort of death portrait, the figure sunk in a dark void beneath the earth. Blackness seeps onto and into his body, beginning to veil and ultimately consume it.

Thompson's attention shifts around and settles on subjects of popular culture, commerce and more. In one clever little piece, he pays tribute to a pair of boots, and in another to the late artist Julie Becker. The show varies widely in vigor, but where it's strong, it's deeply, elegiacally so.

*Praz-Delavallade Los Angeles, 6150 Wilshire Blvd. Tuesdays-Saturdays, through July 6.  
(323) 509-0895, [praz-delavallade.com](http://praz-delavallade.com)*



"To Julie Becker" by Augustus Thompson, 2019. Oil, carbon transfer, charcoal on linen, 48 inches by 72 inches (From Praz-Delavallade Los Angeles)