

NIGEL MULLINS
Mass Gatherings





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13 September – 12 October 2019

EVERARD READ | LONDON



In his second solo exhibition at Everard Read London, South African artist, Nigel Mullins, presents vivid and compelling scenes of recent and historic gatherings that have become momentous and iconic. His painterly exploration makes use of sumptuous impasto, veering between figuration and abstraction without restraint.

Mullins' large-format works encompass a dizzying view of Trafalgar Square during the Trump protests; a brooding night sky over the Charlie Hebdo protests in Paris; swooping cinematic vistas of Times Square, New York on VE day, 1945; smears of kaleidoscopic colour depicting a climate change march in Amsterdam; a vast gathering in Moscow's Red Square shortly before the fall of the USSR; and the

1913 Woman Suffrage March on Washington, DC, the crowd rendered in a monochromatic riot of paint.

These works convey the turmoil and restlessness of our times; their power lies in their ability to capture the Instagram-able images of mass gatherings that characterise our era. Mullins' canvases, with their vertiginous vantage point and lashings of paint, both sensual and viscous, give the sensation of soaring above the crowd and simultaneously falling to earth and merging with the jostling, raucous mass of humanity.

Georgie Shields, July 2019

LEFT (DETAIL)

VE Day Mass Gathering, 1945, New York

oil on canvas with framed ink and watercolour on paper
140 x 110 cm

PAGE 1 (DETAIL)

Charlie Hebdo Protest, Paris

oil on canvas
150 x 200 cm

PAGE 2 (DETAIL)

Effigy for a Gathering

oil on supawood, frame and copper
102 x 59 cm



ABOVE AND RIGHT (DETAIL)
Woman Suffrage Procession, 1913
oil on canvas
180 x 220 cm



ABOVE AND PAGE 6 (DETAIL)

Gathering in Moscow, 1991

oil on canvas

150 x 200 cm





ABOVE AND RIGHT (DETAIL)
Gathering in Hyde Park
oil on canvas
120 x 220 cm



Charlie Hebdo Protest, Paris
oil on canvas
150 x 200 cm



Inauguration
oil on canvas
120 x 220 cm



ABOVE AND LEFT (DETAIL)
Protest at Trafalgar Square
oil on canvas
120 x 180 cm

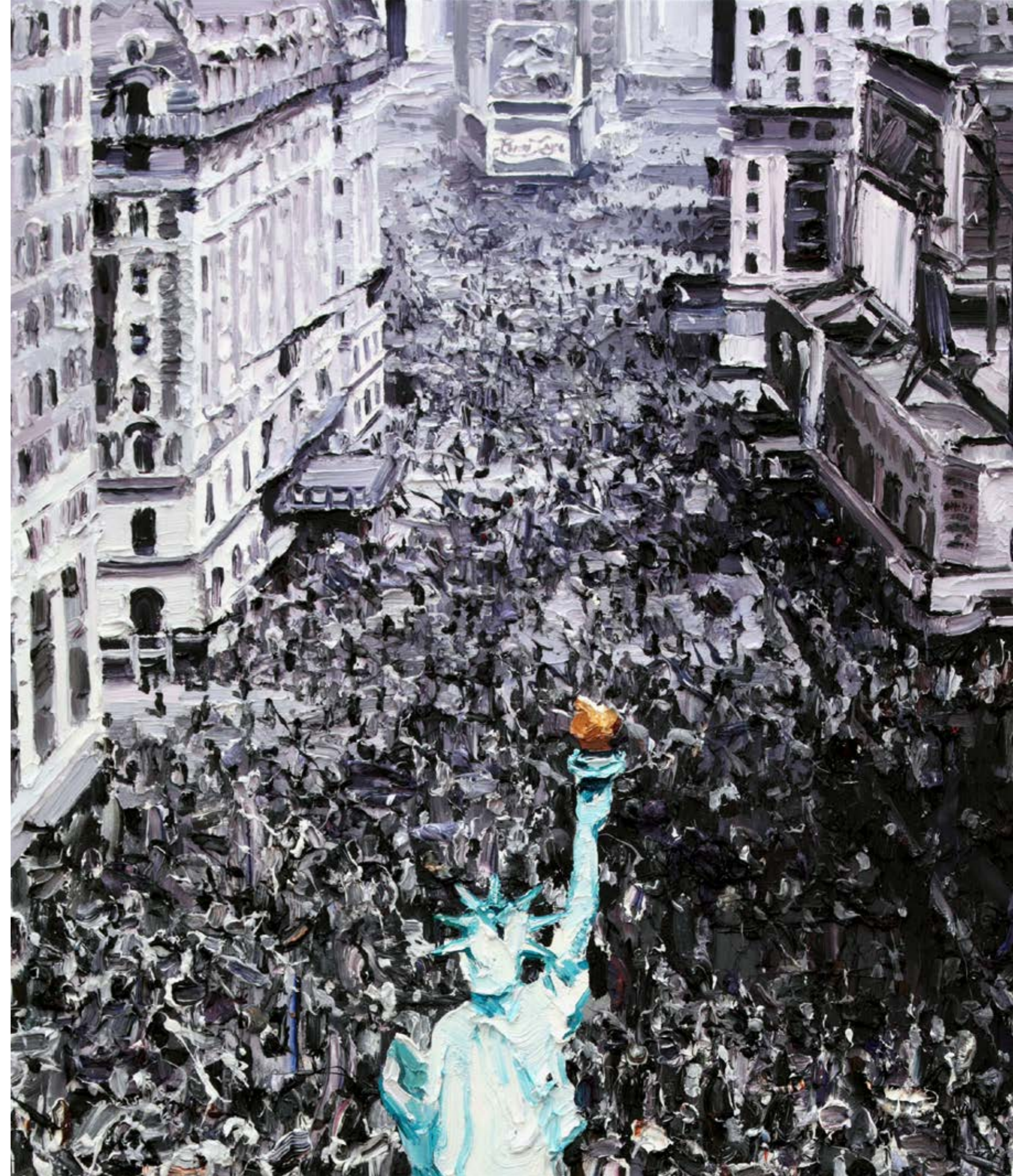
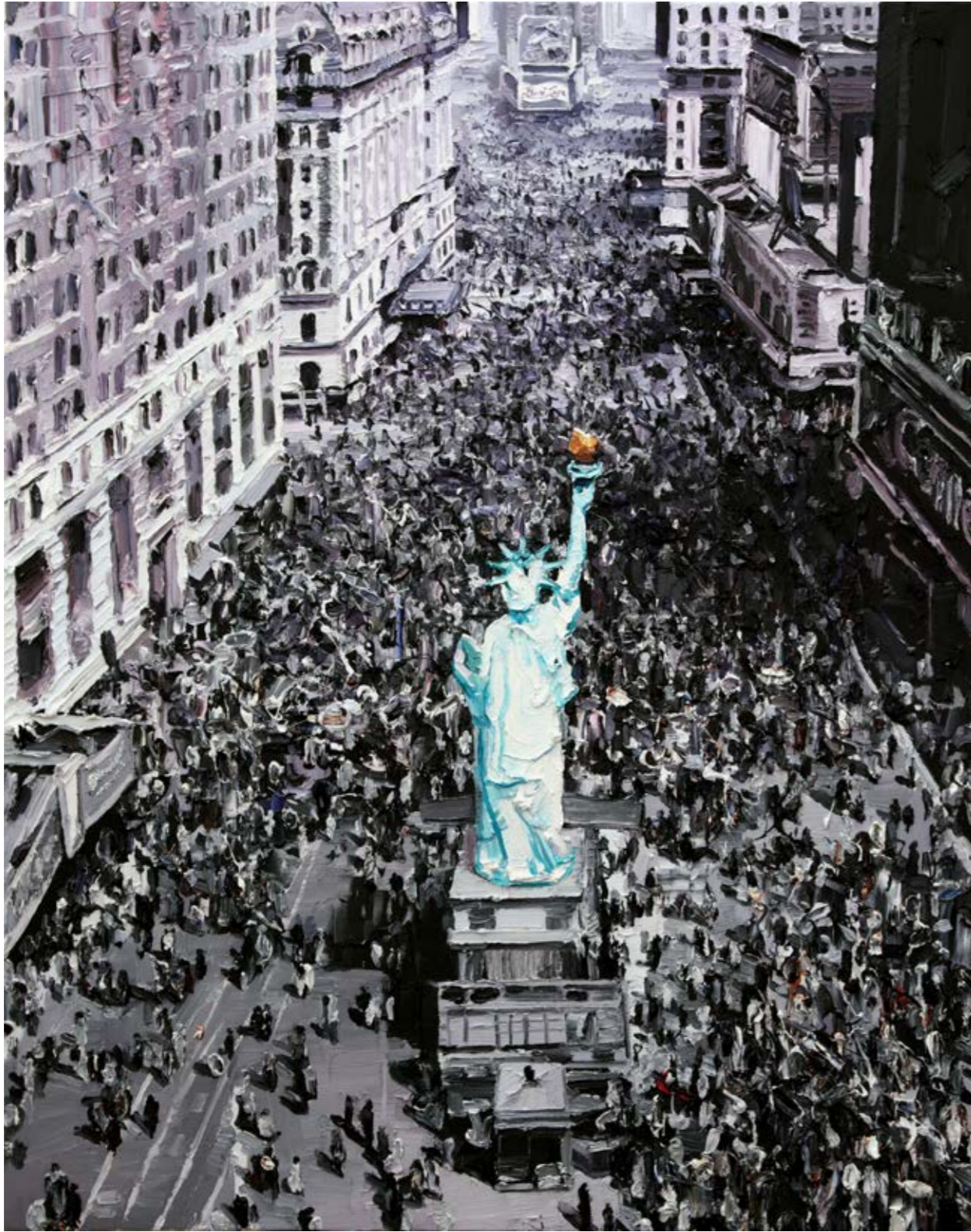


LEFT AND PAGE 12 (DETAIL)
Gay Pride, Sao Paulo
oil on canvas
120 x 180 cm

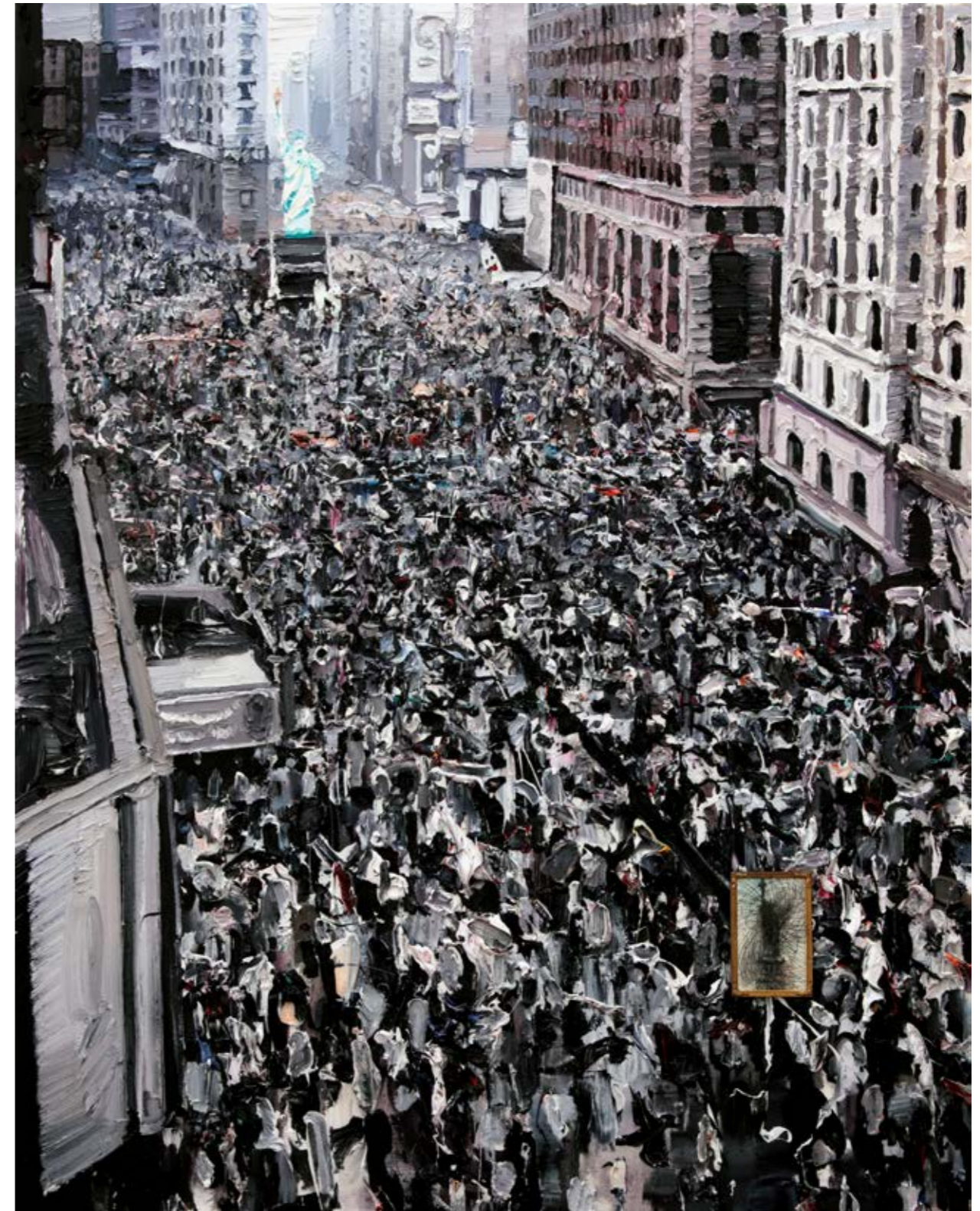




ABOVE AND LEFT (DETAIL)
Mass Gathering for Charlie Hebdo, Paris
oil on canvas
150 x 110 cm



ABOVE AND RIGHT (DETAIL)
VE Day, New York, 1945
oil on canvas
140 x 110 cm



ABOVE AND LEFT (DETAIL)
VE Day Mass Gathering, 1945, New York
oil on canvas with framed ink and watercolour on paper
140 x 110 cm



ABOVE AND RIGHT (DETAIL)
Climate Change Protest, Amsterdam
oil on canvas
150 x 110 cm





Crowd
oil on canvas
110 x 140 cm



ABOVE AND RIGHT (DETAIL)

Goddess of Democracy, 1989
oil on supawood, frame and copper
147 x 76 cm





Effigy for a Gathering
oil on supawood, frame and copper
102 x 59 cm



ABOVE AND PAGE 20 (DETAIL)
Effigy from a Gathering
oil on supawood, frame and copper
113 x 58 cm





Mass Gatherings

Nigel Mullins' most recent body of work, *Mass Gatherings*, involves intense painterly constructions of the phenomenon of intentional crowds. Within these paintings, there is a distinct tension between the masses of people and their direct environments. Some of Mullins' paintings refer to specific events and this is alluded to in the titles as well as in the contextualisation of the crowd in proximity to recognisable landmarks – the Capitol, Trafalgar Square etc. In other works, he uses a city's architectural aesthetic to contextualise the place; Cairo, Amsterdam and Paris most notably.

The dynamic between the organic masses of bodies and the angular regularity of architecture is direct and visual, but this tension not only points to the barely-constrained physical energy of the gatherings, but also the disparity between the age of human bodies in the crowd and the age of the buildings and cityscapes that hold them. In this aspect, the crowds are held by their own history, shaped over centuries and generations, layers and patinas of culture, politics and power.

The era of instant communication and social media has enabled the phenomenon of mass gatherings through easy practical organisation of resistance or protest events (which historically was furtive and difficult) and has also allowed for the co-ordination of simultaneous global gatherings.

The online presence of these events helps to generate power and traction beyond the physical gathering and can help amplify events in places where authority seeks to conceal and suppress. This real-time visibility also works as a safety precaution in places where authority may not be overtly suppressive but where police and military forces – who may have previously been accustomed to using strongarm tactics – need to be accountable and above the law.

The painterly quality is the success of this body of work. The palettes of the paintings sometimes contextualise the time or place of these

events through reference to photographic aesthetic, but where Mullins transcends this is through the complexity of his colours. Seen in the flesh, each blob or scrape of paint is intense. Many of these marks are made up of a spectrum of colour and are irreproducible, invoking the uniqueness of one individual within a crowd.

In a similar manner to which Mullins transcends photographic colour, he also transcends the online Image Economy – through which we are used to receiving information via a screen. The way he does this is as much through the three-dimensional quality of his paint as in the scale of the canvasses. Standing in front of each work, the experience is immersive.

Paint handling in some areas is thick, messy and chaotic and in other areas ordered and careful. The swoops of rainbow colour in *Gay Pride Sao Paolo* revel in themselves in contrast to the restrained facades of grey office block buildings. Abstracted vibrating spectra in *Crowd* are disrupted by thick bands of paint shaped like election rally rosettes.

Most disturbingly, Mullins can make a crowd, in paint, read as something more or something else – the guts of the body of people, for example – as in *Inauguration*, where the split line of the rally seen from above initially reads as a dividing slash. In some works, Mullins' hyper-impasto paint suggests fleshy vibrant vitality; in others, viscera.

It's possible that we are moving into a time where many of us want to feel more agency, in our national and global context, perhaps because we feel increasingly powerless, or perhaps because we feel more empowered in other ways, in making our voices count. There is a tremendous strength and charge in standing together for a collective goal, and Mullins encapsulates this fervour and energy in *Mass Gatherings*.

Tanya Poole, artist, June 2019



LEFT (DETAIL)

Inauguration
oil on canvas
120 x 220 cm

PAGE 23 (DETAIL)

Mass Gathering for Charlie Hebdo, Paris
oil on canvas
150 x 110 cm



NIGEL MULLINS

b. 1969, Grahamstown, South Africa

Nigel Mullins completed his Master of Fine Art degree with distinction at Rhodes University, South Africa in 1993. Since graduating, he has had numerous solo exhibitions in South Africa, the UK and Germany and has taken part in some 50 group shows. His work has been represented on the Cape Town, Johannesburg, Frankfurt and London art fairs and on the Mumia International Underground Animation Festival, Brazil.

In 2014 he exhibited a body of work called *Chaotic Region* at Oliewenhuis Art Museum in Bloemfontein, South Africa. Mullins is the winner of the first prize at the Royal Over Seas League 14th Annual Open Exhibition in London in 1997, he was a nominee for the Daimler Chrysler Award for Contemporary South African Art in 2000 and recipient of a merit prize at the ABSA Atelier in the same year.

Mullins' work is held in public and private collections in South Africa, the UK and Europe.

SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2018 *Glorious Order*, CIRCA Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2017 *Artefacts from the Anthropocene*, CIRCA Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2016 *Retrogressive Propaganda*, Everard Read Cape Town, South Africa
Nigel Mullins: 21st Century Talismans, CIRCA Gallery, London, UK

2015 *The Obsolete Remnants of the Industrial age*, Fried Contemporary, Pretoria, South Africa

2014 *Buy You Time*, Equus Gallery, Western Cape, South Africa
Chaotic Region, Oliewenhuis Art Museum, Bloemfontein, South Africa

2013 *Chaotic Region*, curated by Tanya Poole, Rhodes University Alumni Gallery and Standard Bank Gallery, South Africa
Chaotic Region, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2008 *Caveman Spaceman*, Bell-Roberts Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2006 *Earthlings*, Bell-Roberts Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2005 *Ends and Escapes*, Bell-Roberts Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

2004 *Pacifier*, ABSA Bank Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa

2003 *Fix*, Rhodes University Alumni Gallery, Albany Museum, Grahamstown Arts Festival, South Africa

2001 *Hopeful Monsters*, Hanel Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Superhuman, ROSL, London and Edinburgh, UK
Hopeful Monsters, Hanel Gallery, Wiesbaden, Germany
Hopeful Monsters, Lithographs in Collaboration with Fine Line Press

2000 *New Work*, Dorp street Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa

1999 *Superhuman*, Hanel Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa

1998 *ROSL Prizewinner Exhibition*, Continuum, Landings Gallery, Edinburgh, UK
Continuum, Lamont Gallery, London, UK
Momentum, Grahamstown Arts Festival and Association of Arts, Pretoria, South Africa

1994 *Window into the South African Landscape*, Grosvenor St, Mayfair, London, UK



SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2019** *Southern Aspect – A Group Exhibition*, Everard Read, London, UK
- 2017** *Bronze, Steel and Stone II*, Everard Read Gallery, London, UK
Winter Collection, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, SA
 FNB Joburg Art Fair, Everard Read Circa Booth, Johannesburg, SA
 Cape Town Art Fair, Everard Read Circa Booth, Cape Town, SA
- 2016** *Opening Exhibition*, CIRCA Gallery Group exhibition, London, UK
- 2015** 1:54 Contemporary African Art Fair, CIRCA Gallery Booth, London, UK
 FNB Joburg Art Fair, Everard Read Gallery Booth, Johannesburg, South Africa
 Cape Town Art Fair 2015, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa
Empire, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
Winter, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2014** Cape Town Art Fair 2014, Everard Read Gallery, Cape Town, SA
 Johannesburg Art Fair 2014, Johans Borman Fine Art, Johannesburg, South Africa
Everard Read Winter Exhibition, Cape Town, South Africa
- 2013** *Tom Waits For No Man*, curated by Gordon Froud, Klein Karoo Nasionale Kunstfees, Oudtshoorn, South Africa
Weerberig, Curated by Luan Nel, Aardklop, South Africa
Kunstfees, Potchefstroom, South Africa
 Johannesburg Art Fair, Everard Read Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa
- 2011** *MullinsPoole*, The Bettendorffsche Gallery, Germany
- 2010** *View From The South*, Everard Read, Cape Town, South Africa
On Colour, Colour a Colloquium, Albany Museum, Grahamstown, South Africa
 8th MUMIA – Underground World Animation Festival 2010, Brazil
Juncture. Painting from South Africa. Nigel Mullins, Tanya Poole, Luan Nel. artSPACE, Berlin, Germany
 International Festival of Animated Film of Fortaleza, Brazil

- 2009** Johannesburg Art Fair, Johannesburg, South Africa
 X2, Albany Museum, Grahamstown National Arts Festival, South Africa
Hang in There, Dorp Street Gallery, Stellenbosch, South Africa
- 2008** Johannesburg Art Fair, Johannesburg, South Africa
Between Meaning and Matter, Bell-Roberts, Cape Town, South Africa

SELECTED PUBLIC COLLECTIONS

ABSA, Nelson Mandela Metropolitan Art Museum
 Ann Bryant Art Museum
 Deloitte and Touche
 Ernst and Young
 Hollard Insurance
 Ken Logan Art Collection, USA
 KPMG
 Nandos UK
 Oliewenhuis Art Museum
 Old Mutual Bank
 Pretoria Art Museum, Sanlam
 Rhodes University Collection
 South African Association
 Spier Art Collection
 SAB
 SASOL
 Telkom, Rand Merchant Bank
 Westminster and Chelsea Hospital Collection, London, UK
 ZENECA

SELECTED AWARDS

- 1997** First Prize, Royal Overseas League 14th Annual Exhibition. London.
- 1999** Nominee for the Daimler Chrysler Award for Contemporary South African Art
- 2000** Merit Prize, ABSA Atelier



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Modern and contemporary art from southern Africa

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