

# GLADSTONE

Gabrielle Schwarz, "Joseph Yaeger- The Perimeter," *Artforum*, January 11, 2023

## ARTFORUM

### Joseph Yaeger

The Perimeter



Joseph Yaeger, *Old long since*, 2022, watercolor on gessoed linen, 106 1/4 × 74 3/4".

There's a creeping sense of unease in "Time Weft," Joseph Yaeger's show of twenty-five new paintings, occupying all five levels of the Perimeter's converted news-house space. We see the right arm of a man in a white lab coat holding out a pill in his palm; a close-up of a woman staring ahead, ice-blue eyes frozen, face splattered with a black viscous substance; another woman, a Hitchcockian blonde, whose eyes are covered by the hand of a man standing close behind her—all painstakingly rendered in watercolor on gessoed linen. The surfaces have a scratchy, slippery, luminous quality, like old photographs, textured by time. But where does the foreboding actually come from? The compositions are tightly cropped; we get no context to clarify the scenarios. The titles, gnomic intimations like *Freedom from want*, *Slow down where it hurts*, *Blood*, add another layer of mystery.

Yaeger's paintings are based on existing images—from undisclosed sources—that, as he puts it, “jar me, attract me, dislodge me.” In a poem written by the artist that is included in the exhibition catalogue, he reflects on a stock image of a ravine he once encountered in his orthodontist's office: “My greatest desire was not aimed ... towards a place / but its representation.” For all their affective power, Yaeger's works are also a cerebral analysis of mediation and reception, of how paintings can transform their subjects by creating illusory spaces of physical and psychological depth, and how they can likewise be transformed by language, their environment, and the perception of the viewer. Maybe there's nothing sinister going on after all—or is that just what they want you to think?