

# MUSÉE

VANGUARD OF PHOTOGRAPHY CULTURE

## ZOE WALSH: NIGHT FIELDS | YOSSI MILO



Zoe Walsh, *Outside in*, 2025 Acrylic on Canvas-Wrapped Panel. © Zoe Walsh. Courtesy Yossi Milo, New York.

**Written by Çisemnaz Çil | December 10, 2025**

To enter Zoe Walsh: *Night Fields* at Yossi Milo is to enter a painting practice that acts less like a stable pictorial system than a weather pattern, changing temperature, density, and visibility from canvas to canvas. The show does not simply “represent” queer bodies in outdoor space; it stages the very conditions under which seeing, desiring, and remembering become possible. In Walsh’s hands, painting is less a surface on which images appear than a field in which they flicker, dissolve, and recombine, always in excess of any single reading.

What anchors this fugitive visuality is an unusually precise sense of context. *Night Fields* is built on two overlapping geographies: the public terrain of Griffith and Elysian Parks, where filmmaker Pat Rocco shot utopian visions of gay intimacy in 1960s–70s Los Angeles, and a private garden in present-day L.A., saturated with its own queer history. Rocco's photographs, drawn from the ONE Institute archive, document a moment when claiming visibility in public space was itself a radical act. The garden, by contrast, is a site of continuity and mourning: once home to Bill Bailey and his partner Roy Dennis Brown, it carries the memory of the AIDS crisis in a literal way—Brown's ashes were scattered beneath a kumquat tree that still bears fruit. Walsh's staged photographs with their spouse, Isabel Osgood-Roach, and friends are set in this garden, folding contemporary queer domestic life into a longer, fragile lineage.

The power of the exhibition lies in the way these two temporalities—Rocco's archival images and Walsh's present-day collaborations—are neither simply juxtaposed nor nostalgically fused but recomposed inside virtual space, then translated back into paint. The process is exacting and conceptually charged. Using Blender, Walsh constructs digital environments peopled by chain-link fences, overgrown foliage, street lamps, and fragments of infrastructure. These are not neutral backdrops; they are coded traces of how cities regulate visibility, access, and safety. Walsh then moves through these environments much like a gamer, deploying hundreds of virtual cameras to capture oblique angles and hovering points of view. Vision in this phase is untethered from the physical body: the “camera” slides through ivy, arcs above freeways, and peers between trees, rehearsing a kind of queer, gravity-defying looking that refuses the straight line of conventional perspective.

From there, the scenes are fractured once more—deconstructed and reassembled through cinematic montage in Blender and Photoshop. Cuts, repetitions, and temporal jumps re-enter the image, with the result that, by the time a composition is ready to migrate to canvas, it already holds multiple overlapping moments and vantage points. Spatial coherence gives way to polyphony. These are images that have had several lives before they ever touch paper or linen.

The physical paintings materialize through a labor-intensive choreography of silkscreen and acrylic. Walsh pulls hundreds of hand-made screen prints, then works back into them with squeegees, spatulas, and brushes. Mis-registrations, stencil bleeds, and transparent veils of pigment are left visible, even emphasized. The surface becomes a low relief where light gets caught in ridges of ink and paint, sliding across translucent films before disappearing into denser passages. Error is never corrected out; it is rerouted into structure. To stand close to these works is to see a meticulous record of pressure and



Zoe Walsh, *Stillness of*, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas-Wrapped Panel.  
© Zoe Walsh. Courtesy Yossi Milo, New York.





Zoe Walsh, *Smolderer*, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas-Wrapped Panel. © Zoe Walsh. Courtesy Yossi Milo, New York.



Zoe Walsh, *Rule and Energy*, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas-Wrapped Panel. © Zoe Walsh. Courtesy Yossi Milo, New York.

revision—the weight of the hand, the drag of a tool, the moment when a screen slipped half a centimeter. The paintings register time in layers rather than in narrative.

In this materially dense environment, figures appear and disappear like afterimages. Sometimes they are clearly legible: the curve of an embracing pair, the outline of a body leaning, watching, waiting. Elsewhere they emerge only as silhouettes or as faint shadows doubling another shape. The viewer is always on the cusp of recognizing someone, some gesture, yet the works consistently redirect attention away from portraiture toward the choreography of surface and color. These figures function as thresholds rather than subjects: points where private desire brushes against historical memory, where we glimpse a body before it dissolves back into foliage, fence, or atmosphere.

Crucially, these bodies are drawn from both Rocco's archive and Walsh's own community. That double sourcing matters. When archival lovers share pictorial space with the artist, their spouse, and friends, the paintings collapse any clean separation between "then" and "now." The history of clandestine embraces in Griffith Park spills into the present-day garden with its AIDS-era kumquat tree. The archival image is not merely quoted; it is reactivated in relation to living, breathing people who carry its legacy forward. Identification itself becomes one of Walsh's key mediums: to paint is to imagine oneself in relation to others across time, to inhabit their gestures while remaining aware of the distance that can never fully close.

In *Night Fields*, color is a kind of microclimate. Walsh's palette follows the logic of CMYK printing—phthalo blue, quinacridone magenta, hansa yellow light, burnt umber—translated from the additive glow of screen-based color to the subtractive density of pigment. Deep violets, murky greens, and bruised oranges conjure twilight and sodium streetlight alike, hovering between natural dusk and artificial illumination. Light here reveals and withholds simultaneously. Edges dissolve into mist; forms flare for a moment before sinking back into the field. The paintings occupy what might be called a perceptual in-between, a zone where one is never quite sure whether night is falling or lifting, whether what is visible will stay that way.



Zoe Walsh, *Shimmer across thresholds*, 2025. Acrylic on Three Canvas-Wrapped Panels. © Zoe Walsh. Courtesy Yossi Milo, New York.

This play with thresholds is amplified in the exhibition's centerpiece, the monumental triptych *Shimmer across thresholds*. Two embracing figures anchor the left panel, then reappear—multiplied, abstracted, stretched—across the right, as the sequence shifts from saturated sunset to almost monochromatic night. The central panel, with its still, silhouetted forms, acts as a hinge: a pause between movements rather than a point of resolution. The seams where panels meet echo the vertical “zips” generated by adjacent screen-printed bands. These joins never fully disappear; they insist on the work’s constructedness, reminding us that even the most immersive field is stitched together from fragments. The triptych thus stages a double encounter: between bodies and between modes of image-making, digital and tactile, imagined and materially grounded.



Zoe Walsh, *Flame or star*, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas-Wrapped Panel. © Zoe Walsh. Courtesy Yossi Milo, New York.

Throughout, Walsh’s practice serves as a kind of trans phenomenology of vision. The press text makes explicit, in citing Susan Stryker’s formulation, that trans becoming begins in the “shimmering across thresholds” between imagination and embodiment; the paintings already enact this. These are not illustrations of a coherent trans identity; they are terrains in which subjectivity is continually negotiated through layering, erasure, and reinscription. The body is never fully there or fully absent; it is partially occluded by foliage, cut off by a frame, or reduced to a contour that could belong to several people at once. The paintings give form to an experience of self that is multiple, revisable, and in motion—a mode of being that refuses to settle into a single, completed image.

At the same time, *Night Fields* is deeply invested in queer photographic history. Rocco’s film stills are one anchor, but the works also speak to the wider lineage of artists who have staged or re-staged queer life in landscape—from Catherine Opie’s freeway overpasses to Wolfgang Tillmans’s forest clearings. Walsh’s contribution is to route that history through a digital-physical pipeline that never pretends to neutrality. The



3D models of chain-link fences and street lamps recall both the aesthetics of early video games and the real infrastructures that delimit where bodies can gather. In subjecting these elements to montage, misalignment, and painterly excess, Walsh reveals how space is never a mere backdrop: it is an active participant in shaping what forms of love and visibility are allowed to take place.

If there is a quiet radicality to this exhibition, it resides in how carefully it binds the macro and the micro, the historical and the domestic. The viewer learns about public parks reclaimed as gay cruising grounds, about a garden layered with mourning and fruit trees, about archives housed in institutions and archives held in the body. Yet none of this appears as didactic captioning. Instead, the histories seep into the paintings as glowing thresholds, hovering silhouettes, and persistent motifs—ivy, fences, trees, power lines—that encircle the figures like a protective and sometimes constraining net. The works take seriously the idea that every queer gathering place carries ghosts: of those who came before, of those who never made it, of those whose names survive only in footnotes.



Zoe Walsh, *Short cuts*, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas-Wrapped Panel  
© Zoe Walsh. Courtesy Yossi Milo, New York.

Formally, these paintings keep refusing closure. Just when a composition seems to settle into recognizable depth—a path leading through trees, a figure seated under a streetlamp—an area of dense screening or a swath of misaligned color pulls the eye back to the surface. Architecture seems to almost cohere, then slips away. This oscillation between illusionistic space and flat accumulation prevents the viewer from adopting the detached, all-seeing gaze traditionally associated with landscape painting. Instead, the viewer's vision is entangled, dragged sideways through repeated silhouettes, veiled by pigment, interrupted by zips and seams. One does not simply look “at” these paintings; one moves through the conditions they propose.

*Night Fields* also models a generous understanding of collaboration. The exhibition is, in a sense, coauthored by the queer communities it draws on: Pat Rocco and his lovers in the park, Bill Bailey and Roy Dennis Brown and their garden, Isabel Osgood-Roach behind and in front of the camera, the friends whose bodies inhabit these unstable spaces. Walsh's name appears on the wall label, but the paintings themselves insist that queer world-making is always a collective project, built from shared glances, borrowed gestures, and the delicate work of tending to land and memory over time.

What makes this exhibition distinctive within contemporary painting is the coherence of its conceptual, technical, and affective stakes. Every move—from Blender modelling to silkscreen registration to the flicker of color that finishes each work—serves a larger inquiry into how images mediate our relation to bodies, histories, and places. There is no nostalgic return to analog purity here, nor uncritical embrace of digital spectacle. Instead, Walsh offers a schema in which both realms are porous and interdependent, each revealing the other's limits and possibilities.



Zoe Walsh, *Pleasure is a reason*, 2025. Acrylic on Canvas-Wrapped Panel © Zoe Walsh. Courtesy Yossi Milo, New York.

In the end, *Night Fields* articulates a vision of painting as an open, provisional medium—one uniquely capable of holding parts of the world that are themselves in flux: gender, desire, grief, kinship, the afterlives of political struggle. The show understands that queer and trans life has always unfolded in thresholds: between visibility and erasure, danger and sanctuary, archive and speculation, day and night. Walsh does not resolve those tensions; they let them shimmer, layered across canvas, until the viewer finds themselves standing in that same in-between—looking, remembering, and, perhaps, imagining new ways of inhabiting the fields that surround us.