

A dark, moody oil painting of a person's face and hand. The face is partially obscured by deep shadows, with a small, bright red mark on the forehead. The hand is visible, with fingers slightly curled. The background is dark and textured, with some lighter, ethereal light sources creating a sense of depth and atmosphere.

MICHAEL SIMMS

Body Talk

MICHAEL SIMMS

Body Talk

[VIEW EXHIBITION ONLINE](#)

17 JUNE - 5 JULY 2025

EXHIBITION OPENING PARTY

Meet the artist and celebrate with us at the exhibition opening party on
Saturday 21 June 2025, 1 - 3pm

Light refreshments provided. We look forward to seeing you there.

RSVP appreciated to assistant@flg.com.au



Body Talk

Catalogue Essay by Elli Walsh, 2025

Renowned for his deeply felt figurative paintings, Sydney artist Michael Simms engages with molten states of identity, masculinity and the body. Articulated with lively strokes of oil, his painted figures speak of perpendicular states, of the fluidity and fixity of self and our modulating relationship to our own corporeality. The body, for Simms, has always been in dialogue with something external – intertwined with digital technology, in isolation during pandemic, or moving through the expansive Australian landscape. Recently, however, the artist has turned inward to consider the body in alliance with the self, aiming to bring historical narratives into conversation with contemporary discourse.

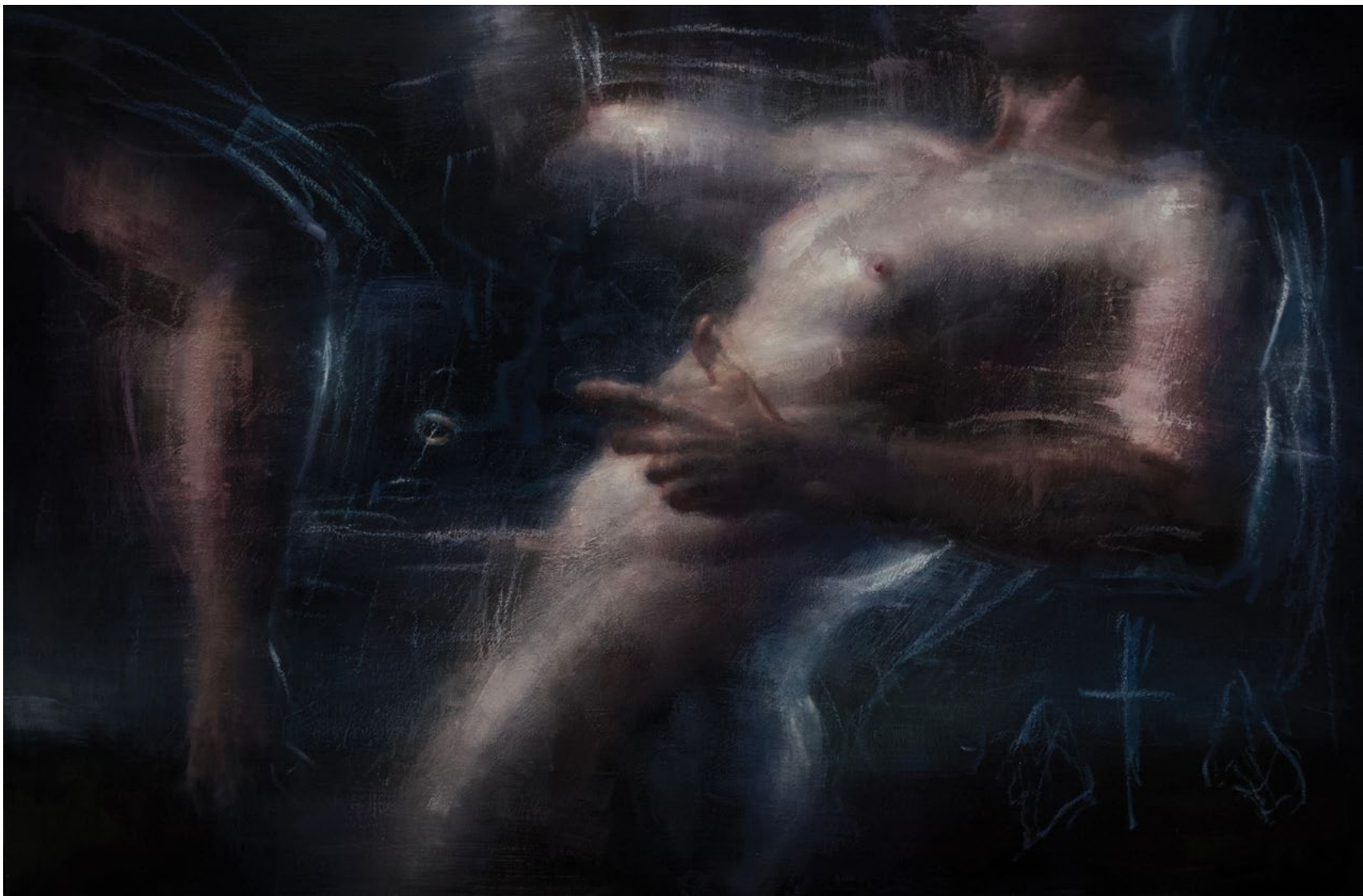
Portraiture plays a foundational role in Simms' practice, portraying artists who create live experiences, in an ongoing project called 'Stages'. Increasingly, he's personally venturing further into the realm of performance, blending and bending genres to create a new kind of body-based poetics. Simms' new series, 'Body Talk', orbits the dynamics of embodied intelligence via deep considerations of performance, movement, and the body in space – and history. It builds on recent explorations of performance practices during residencies at Bundanon and Gang Gang and workshops at Critical Path where the artist engaged with choreographers and movement practitioners. "This changed the way I paint", he reflects, "generating images from a more physical and internal place". Created through an experimental approach of automatism, the works investigate the kinaesthetic potential of the body and how this can shift, shatter and shape the image-making process. An increased awareness of how we move through space has enabled Simms to discover unexpected anatomical shapes and unconventional gestures that challenge historical narratives and traditional tropes of masculinity. "I'm curious about how the male body is so often depicted as being strong, heroic, dominant, fighting, in conflict...and what this unconsciously re-enforces about gender roles, the patriarchy and masculinity," he explains.

Simms considers how this intersects with queer art, how hypermasculinity has been a form of protective armour to shield against discrimination and the perceptions of the queer body as 'weak'. Partly inspired by the gritty boxing match artworks of George Bellows, as well the link between hubris and toxic masculinity in Ribera's painting Ixion, Simms' works look at how perceived 'strength' can handicap true intimacy. Delineating the body as strong and statuesque yet laced with vulnerability and softness, Simms questions what is strength versus weakness, what is liberating and what is oppressive. The body in many of these images is pushed up against the edges of the canvas, the frame a container that both stifles and protects. There is something cinematic here, not simply in the contorted expressiveness but in Simms' lean palette, his subjects shrouded in chiaroscuro like stills from an intimate neo noir moment. Spectral figures recede into shadowy voids as much as they emerge, a tussle of revelation and concealment, dominance and passivity. There is a synecdochic relationship between these painted physiques, each part connecting as one embodied whole, one perpetual motion, as frames from a film reel.

Simms' impressive brushwork evokes textiles, natural fibres and threads, weaving together the fabric of the body. Through automatic drawing, the artist has become aware of the possibilities of open mark making to communicate in a more physical way. You can feel the performance of paint here, the musculature of movement. Brush and body, mind and matter, are one. By carving open a space for chance within the tightly choreographed framework of figurative painting, the ephemeral nature of live performance is fossilised through the permanence – and performance – of oil paint. Simms' gestural bodies are frozen in motion, the canvas like a thin sheet of ice barely able to contain their energy. They pulsate, they quiver, threatening to shatter the surface at any moment. His application of oil here is looser, more liberated, than previous series, the paint an extension of his own performative body as both artist and subject.

In these somatic snapshots, the body talks indeed. Sometimes loudly, with bold gestures and gravelly marks, yet often softly, in Simms' subdued hues and silent shadows whispering of the profound power that dwells in vulnerability.

Contact Claire Harris, Director
with any enquiries or to make a time to view
artworks once they arrive in the gallery.
info@flg.com.au



The Groom Stripped Bare, 2025

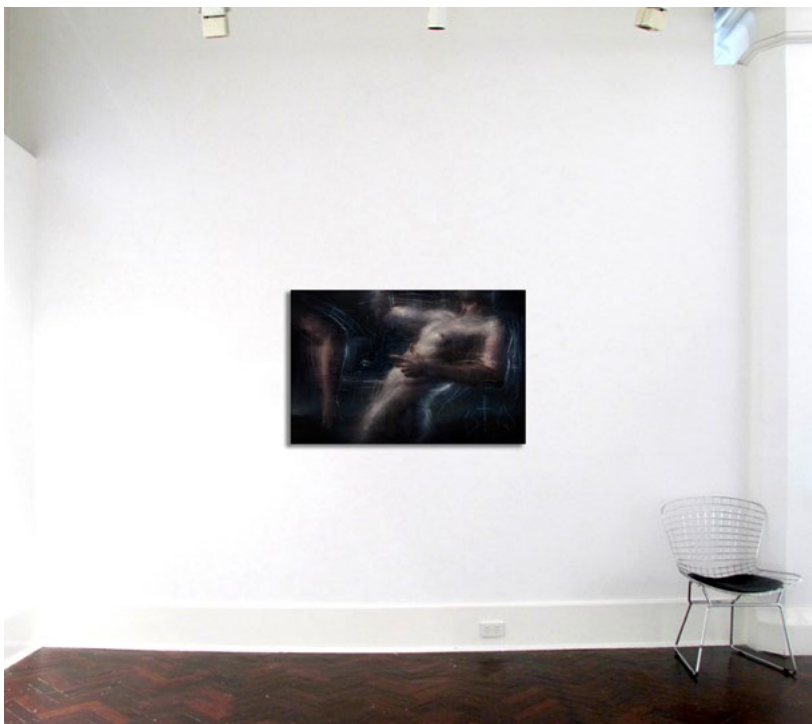
oil on board

80 x 122cm

\$8,000 AUD



Image detail, *The Groom Stripped Bare*



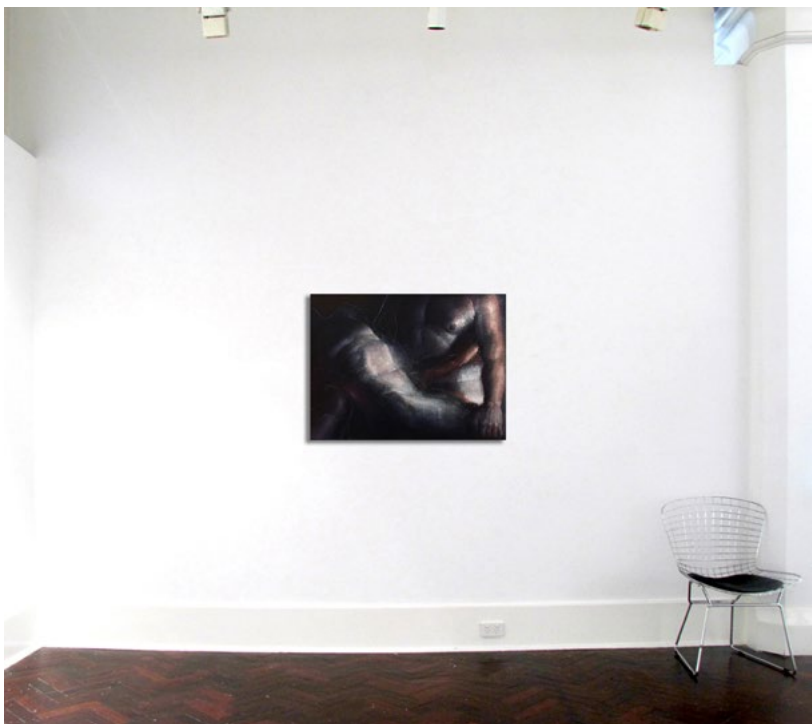
To scale on 3.7m wall



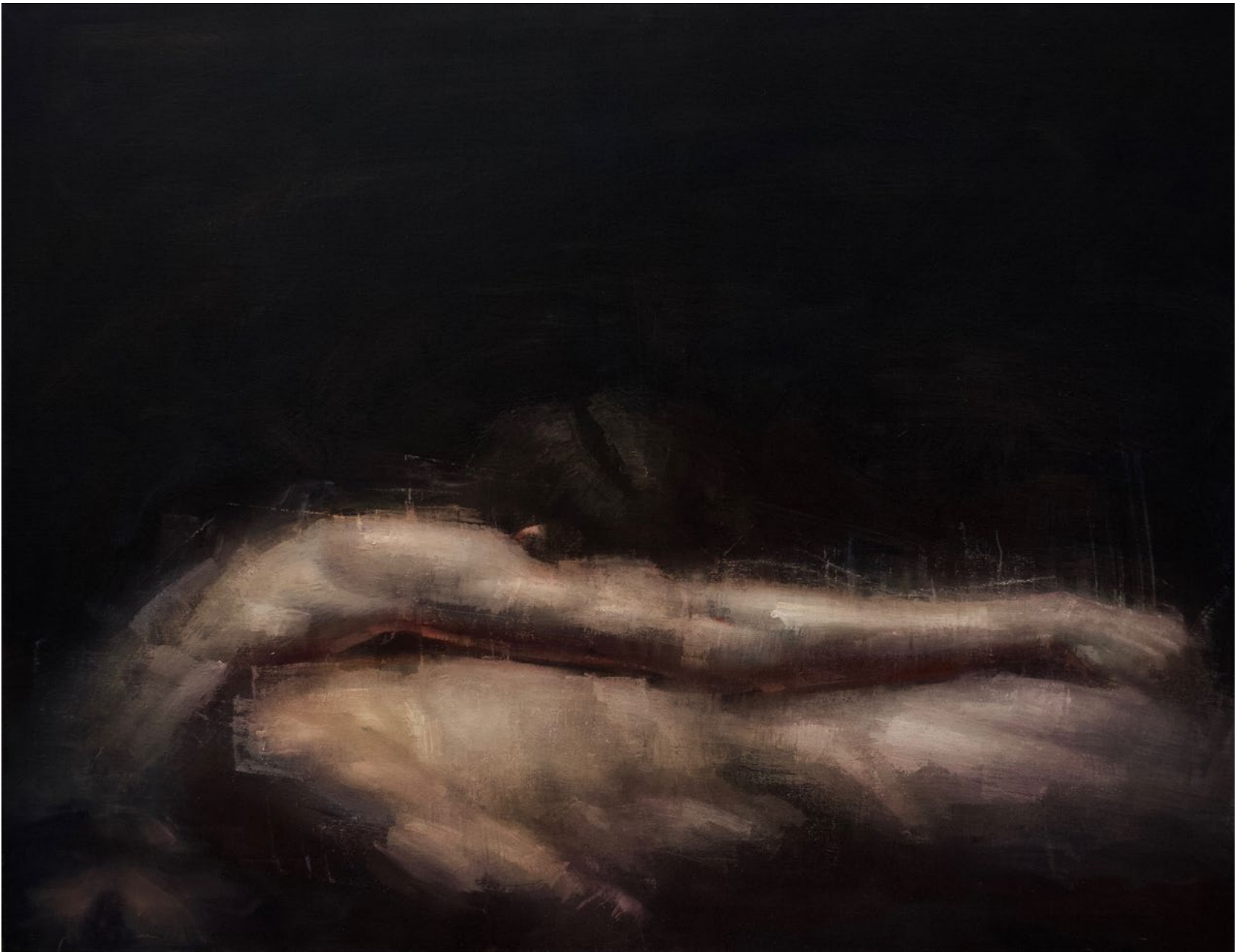
Held In Moonlight, 2025
oil on canvas
76 x 102cm
\$5,500 AUD



Image detail, *Held In Moonlight*



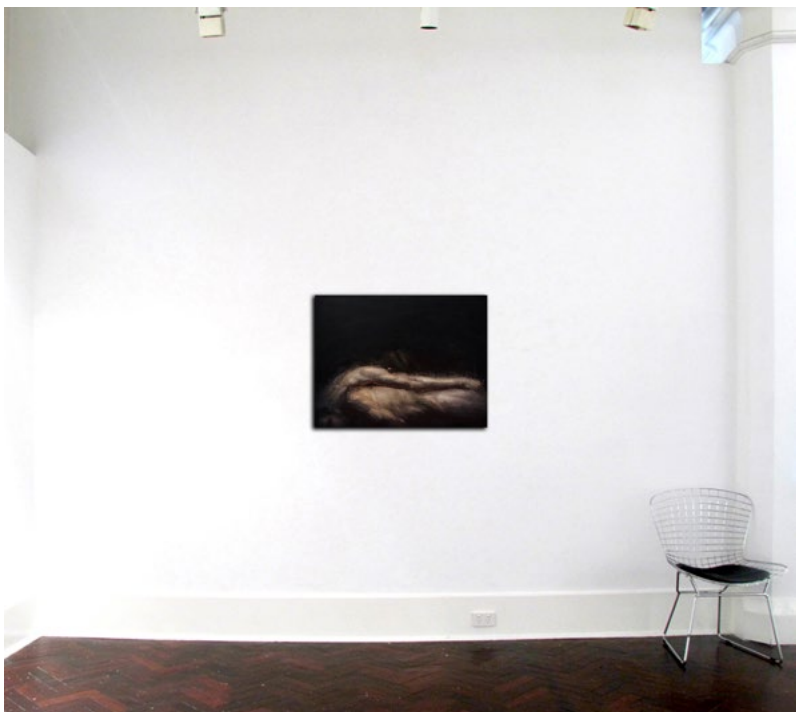
To scale on 3.7m wall



Breath, 2025
oil on canvas
70 x 90
\$4,800



Image detail, *Breath*



To scale on 3.7m wall



Unnamed Thread, 2025
oil on canvas
76 x 61cm
\$4,000 AUD

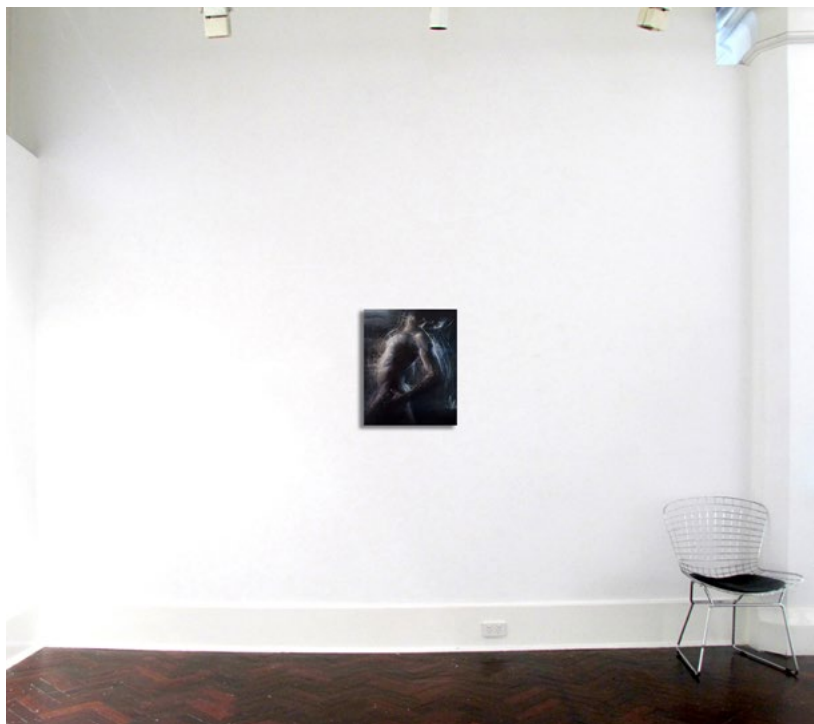


Image detail, *Unnamed Thread*

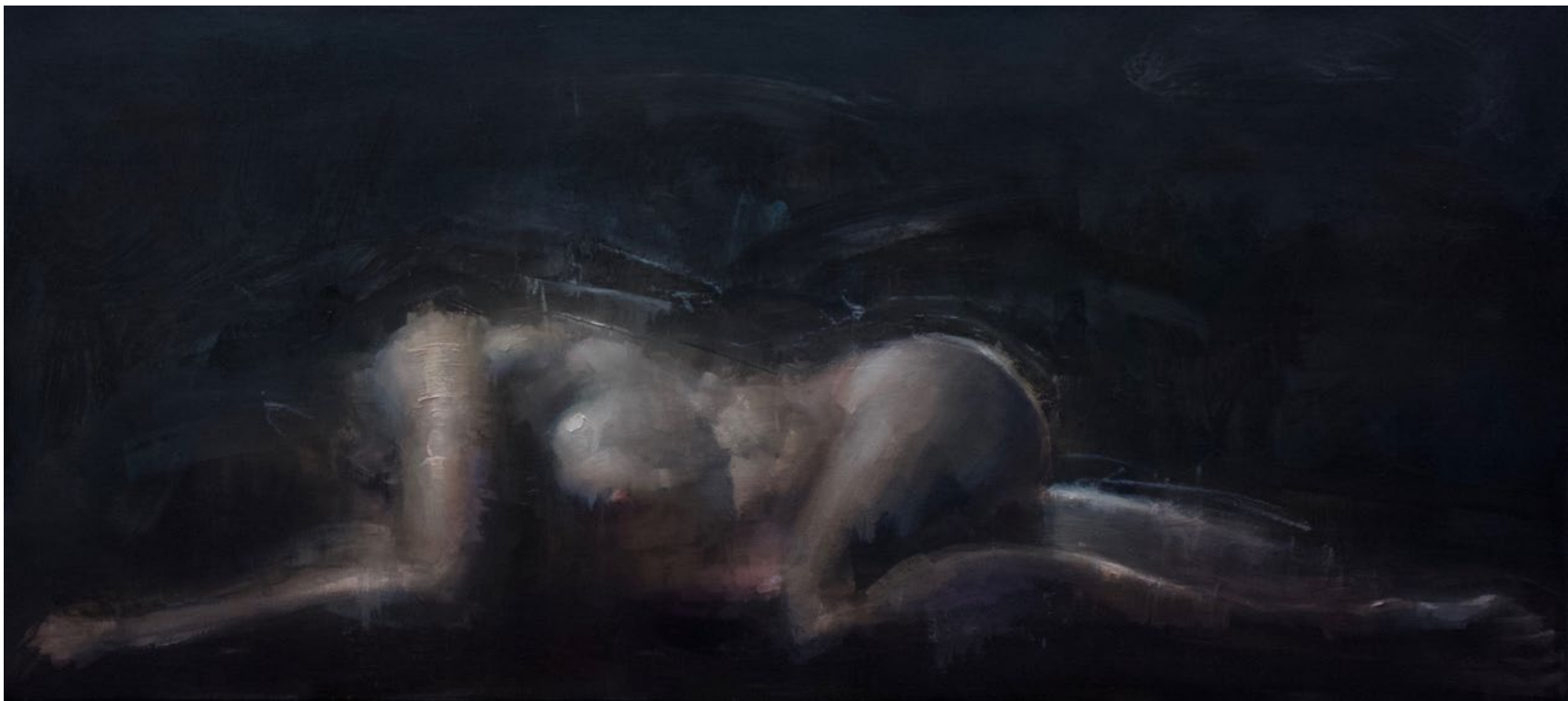
To scale on 3.7m wall



Touching the Edge, 2025
oil on panel,
60 x 46cm
\$3,000 AUD

To scale on 3.7m wall

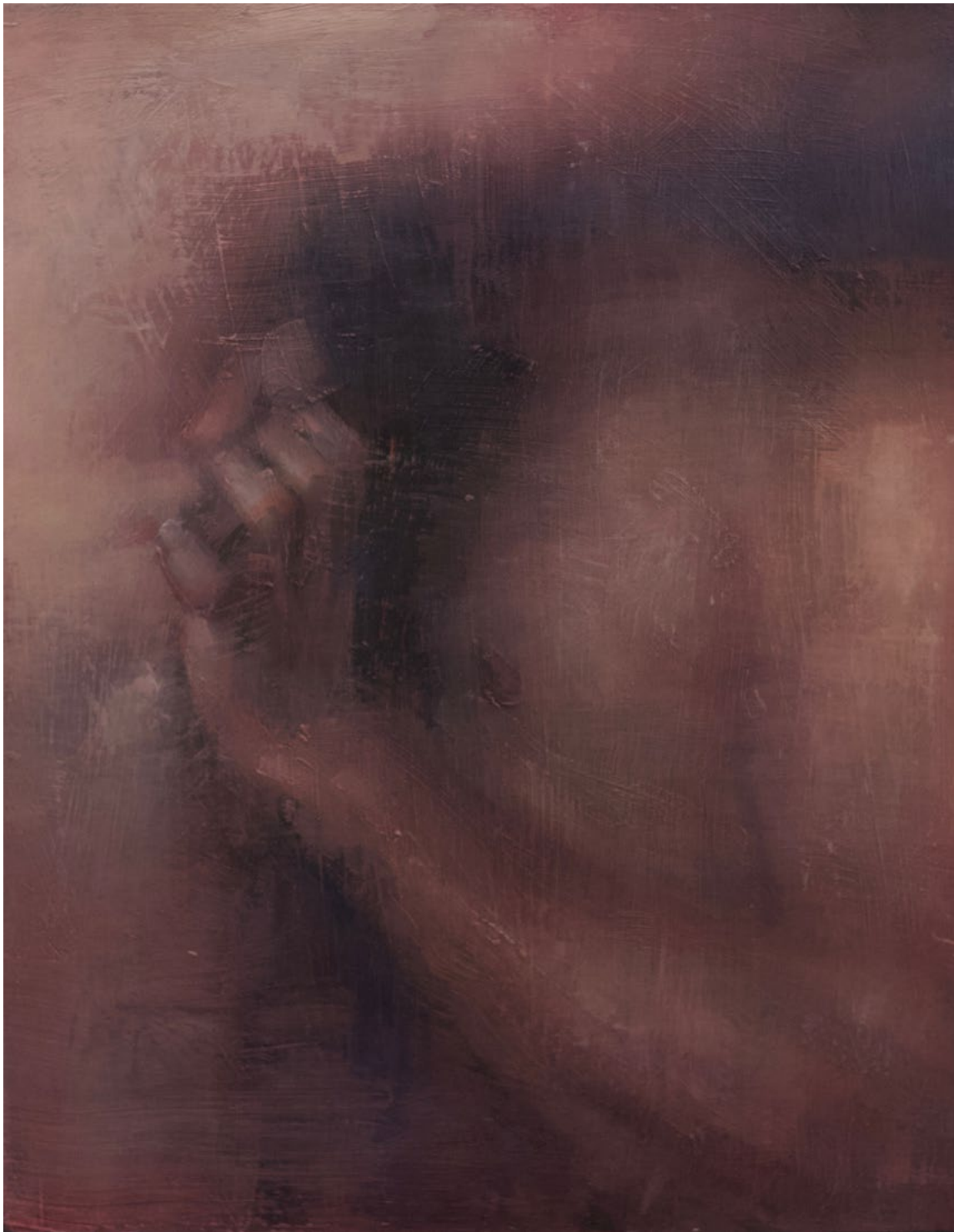




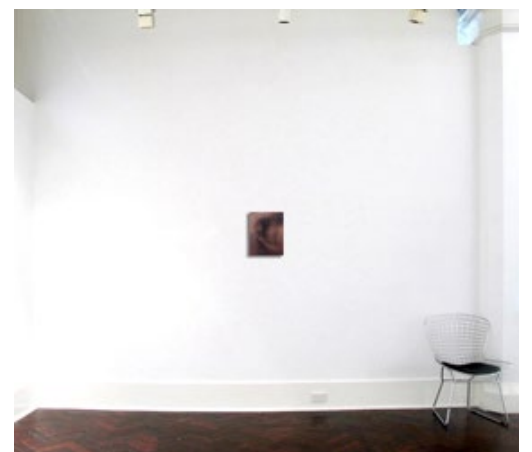
Substance, 2025
oil on canvas
26 x 56cm
\$2,500 AUD

To scale on 3.7m wall



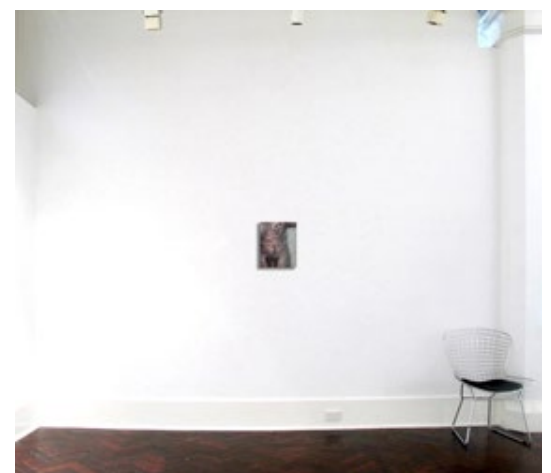


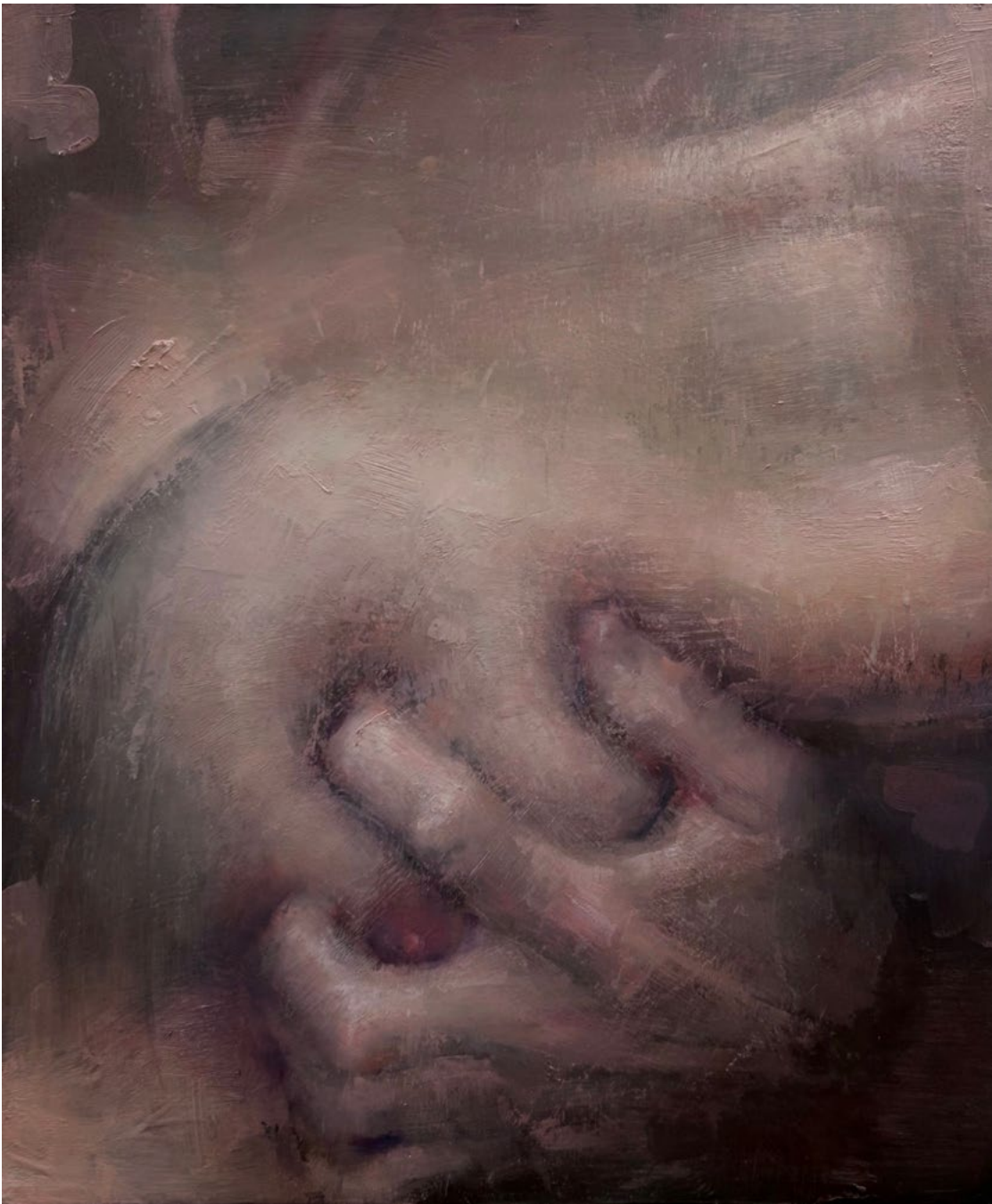
Tender Weight, 2025
oil on panel,
36cm x 28cm
\$2,000 AUD





The Fight, 2025
oil on panel
36cm x 28cm
\$2,000 AUD





Press, 2025
oil on board
30 x 26cm
\$1,800 AUD





'My last few exhibitions have depicted the human body in various contexts - the body in relation to digital technology, the body in relation to the pandemic and the body in relation to the Australian landscape. For my latest series, I'm investigating the kinaesthetic potential of the body and how this can shift the image-making process.'

Last year I began exploring movement based performance practices through residencies and workshops learning from choreographers and movement practitioners. Increased awareness of the ingrained ways in which we move through space has enabled me to find unexpected shapes of the body, and build images that challenge how the body is traditionally depicted in art.

Tapping into this movement practice has also generated new processes for constructing images on a surface. Through automatic drawing, I've become aware of the possibilities of open mark making and line to communicate in a more physical way, allowing for chance to inform the work. 'Body Talk' aims to bring historical narratives around the body into conversation with contemporary discourse.'

Michael Simms, Artist Statement 2025



FLINDERSLANEGALLERY

Level 1, The Nicholas Building
cnr 37 Swanston St and Flinders Lane
MELBOURNE 3000
WWW.FLG.COM.AU
INFO@FLG.COM.AU
+ 61 3 9654 3332

Tue - Sat 11am - 5pm