

# ZOE WALSH

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**For Recent Work See:**

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## Contents

1. Nicholas Robbins, "Zoe Walsh," Yale Painting/Printmaking MFA Thesis Catalog, July 2016.

# Zoe Walsh

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While the projector is a technology of magnification, it can also become a technology of multiplication: images that pass through the projector can be reflected, refracted, and superposed. The seemingly solid, opaque image can be decomposed and turned inside out in order to become a generator of transparencies.

In a series of paintings titled **Projections with Wilhelm von Gloeden**, Zoe Walsh takes up these capacities of the projector in order to produce a matrix of substance that is composed of light, surfaces, objects and images. This process begins with a photograph by Wilhelm von Gloeden (1856–1931) of two boys on a rocky outcropping overlooking the ocean, one boy's hand raised in an arresting but ambivalent gesture. This image is projected simultaneously in Walsh's studio by three projectors, each with its own color cast. These projected images meet on the studio wall, interweaving light and additive color. They produce staccato repetitions, abstract forms, and newly-colored fragments out of the formerly coherent photograph. Walsh interposes objects (the silhouetted forms of the boys' figures and of foliage, a dangling light bulb) that further interfere with the image's legibility. Walsh then photographs this spatialized collage, prints it, and from this photograph, begins the work of painting.

This process of rematerialization in paint proceeds, like the scattered projection of light, by means of layers and adjacencies. Walsh builds up the surface in acrylic paint by a series of gestures with a squeegee across a canvas that has been masked off in sections—a singular, all-at-once making-present of color, like the flash of a light. Unlike the softer, intermingling edges produced by light, the harder edges between the layers of the acrylic produce gaps. These gaps are interfaces between planes of color that begin to suggest both depth and rupture.

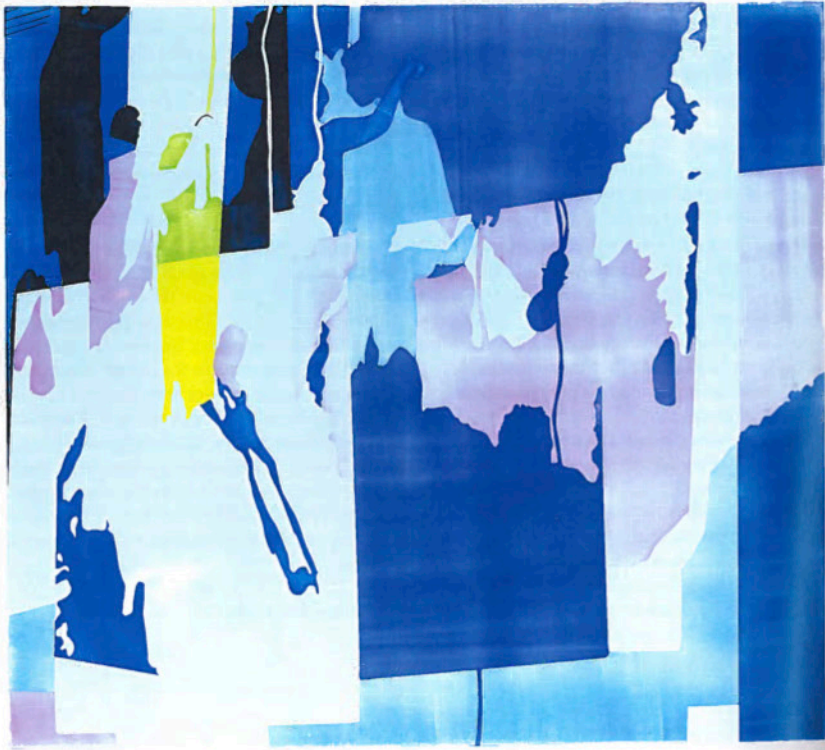
Walsh's engagement with von Gloeden's photographs—which often portray young Sicilian boys in classicizing, erotic poses, and which circulated in queer communities in his time and beyond—presses upon desire and affect. In von Gloeden's images, the bodies of his models seem possessed of an uncomplicated visibility. And yet, they are a product of projection—of desire, of

curiosity, of power. Walsh's projections “with” von Gloeden disarticulate the apparent seamlessness of photographic logic in order to produce multiplicity—shuttling between materiality and light, opacity and transparency. Each painting or “screen” preserves a projection of light that becomes simultaneously the projection of multiple objects, agents, and bodies that, even as their legibility is dispersed, accrue substance.

Projection, embodiment, and legibility meet in the form of gesture—in this case, the oddly non-communicating, limp gesture of the figure from von Gloeden's photograph. This dangling hand repeats across the paintings—as in **Screen D**, in which a liquid hot pink dominates the ground of the painting, but reverses, with the interposition of blue silhouetted heads, to become its “figure”; that same blue then reappears as a smaller silhouetted figure. In this interplay of figure and ground, the materiality of the body becomes a form of transparency—a thing that is seen through, but that, in this way, also comes to produce new relations, multiplicities, and surfaces.

Nicholas Robbins

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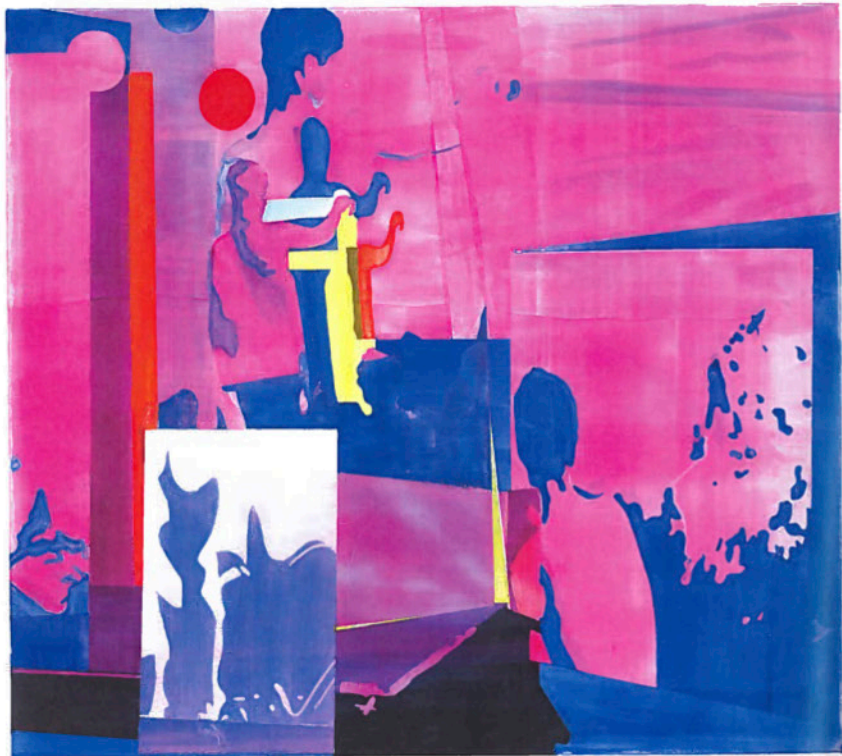
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Screen C (from Projections  
with Wilhelm von Gloeden),  
2016, oil and acrylic on canvas,  
54×60 in.



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Screen B (from Projections  
with Wilhelm von Gloeden),  
2016, oil and acrylic on canvas,  
54×60 in.



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Screen D (from Projections  
with Wilhelm von Gloeden),  
2016, oil and acrylic on canvas,  
54×60 in.



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Screen A (from Projections  
with Wilhelm von Gloeden),  
2016, oil and acrylic on canvas,  
48×36 in.