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Cuccurucucù
Dien Berziga

22 May –
25 June 2026

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INTRODUCTION

Ana Teles

Born in Beijing in 2001, Dien Berziga spent his childhood and teenage years moving between continents, rarely staying more than five years in one place. He passed through Beijing, Parma, Sanya, Torquay, and New York before arriving in London, where he now lives. New destinations brought new encounters – with relatives, teachers, neighbours, and even time spent with nuns – each with their own customs, rituals, and ways of moving through the world. New departures demanded a renegotiation of culture and habits. Over time, these various encounters accumulated into an acquired sensibility for the diverse ways that people carry their direct lived experience with them.

Berziga graduated from Central Saint Martins in 2023 and has painted compulsively ever since. Over a short time, he has developed a visual language that is unmistakably his own: sombre in tone with occasional dense passages of colour, sometimes integrating older materials, and sometimes constructing newly made frames that echo classical architectural forms. His paintings are predominantly atmospheric, populated by half-hidden figures and fragments of landscape, into which geometric shapes borrowed from his surroundings – such as diamonds and squares from textiles and fabrics – arbitrarily appear.

Before attending art school, Berziga surrounded himself with the objects he encountered in his environment. He spent time collecting old and damaged paintings and other artefacts from the cities he passed through, and he took them apart to understand how they were made. That impulse still persists in the way he approaches his work today.

The title of this exhibition, *Cuccurucucù*, was chosen by Berziga for its capacity to conjure many of the things he cares about: memory and the process of remembering, invention, play, and the rescuing of past times within the present. Like his paintings, it promises entry into a world through the familiarity of the images it evokes. *Cuccurucucù* is a children's chant, a nonsense sound that lodges at the back of the throat to become a sensation. It is the call of the cuckoo bird, the announcement of the cuckoo clock. In Italian, cucù is what you say when playing peekaboo with a child, a game of hiding and revealing, of something disappearing and returning, but never quite where you had expected.

Berziga's paintings are sombre in tone and undefined in form, but they emanate a light that draws and holds the eye. Like in a tale from the Brothers Grimm, they lure the viewer into coming closer, into scrutinising the surface, into becoming slowly consumed by it. We see silhouettes, trees emerging from quasi-magical environments. Like children following a trail of breadcrumbs, we go in deeper before we think to stop.

They are not painted from observation, nor from pure imagination. For Berziga, something from the outside world must first be taken apart and dismantled, before it can be reconstructed as a new thing that derives from his inner life. What emerges on the canvas is neither the thing itself nor a fantasy of it, but the external world reconstructed from people, memories, the news, images, transformed by his own sensibility into a novel object. When an image arrives too complete, too recognisable, he resists it, as it has not yet passed through his eyes and hands. There is, in this sense, a necessary degree of destruction in his relation to the world: a refusal to let things remain as they are.

Winnicott wrote that the unconscious wants to be known, and that play, like dreams, serves the function of self-revelation. Berziga paints the way a child plays: he adds, removes, cuts, builds, expands, until something clicks that he did not plan and could not have predicted. Each painting is less a representation of a place or person, but rather something made in the space between self and world.

What draws Berziga to old things is not a romanticised past but the sense that old objects carry lives inside them, stories not fully resolved. In salvaging them and integrating them (sometimes metaphorically and sometimes literally) into his paintings, he displays an impulse to preserve, to being the lives of the objects into his own stories. His childhood is made of fragments, and the paintings are where fragments are gathered.

One of the main characteristics of Berziga's work is the way his paintings become objects, in the sense that relics project an aura, or that artefacts find status behind museum glass, or like architectural remnants that have outlasted the buildings they belonged to. In *A Struggle with some Pigeons* (2026, p.64), a found hand-rail is transformed into a fragment of façade, sustaining a canvas crowned with the same iron nails used on heritage buildings across Europe to deter pigeons. In *Case su Case* (2026, p. 28), a puppet house takes the form of a building that fuses Italian Renaissance architecture with a Chinese pagoda. These (among much of his work) are quotations from the past and a deployment of its visual language, similar to the way institutions signal age, significance, and legitimacy.

For Berziga, authenticity is an ethical not an aesthetic position. It is about being true to the work and, through the work, to oneself. A painting must be earned. There is something austere in his commitment to painting, in the sense that to make something that is genuine one must give oneself to it completely, and that the labour must leave a trace. For Berziga, his paintings must contain truth, and that truth must come from work. This places him at a quiet but significant remove from much contemporary painting that is hastily executed, quickly shown, and dressed in borrowed significance.

Berziga belongs to a generation of painters who grew up familiar with art history but critical of its canon, one that looks as readily to non-Western traditions as to European ones, and feels no obligation to respond to any single legacy. He is among a number of artists drawn to the archaic and the vernacular, to surfaces that emphasise the physical history of paint itself, to objects that carry the residue of time, but what he takes from the past he takes on his own terms. Painting serves his own experience.

Cuccurucucù brings together thirteen works, among them paintings, a swing, and a puppet house in a space that Berziga has shaped as an extension of the work. The gallery becomes a playground that we navigate according to his logic: paintings that fold the architecture into the work, works placed to punctuate, immerse, and surprise. The viewer is invited to join in and play, to move from work to work, to look closely and then closely again, like a child searching for someone to play with, until they realise they have already been found.

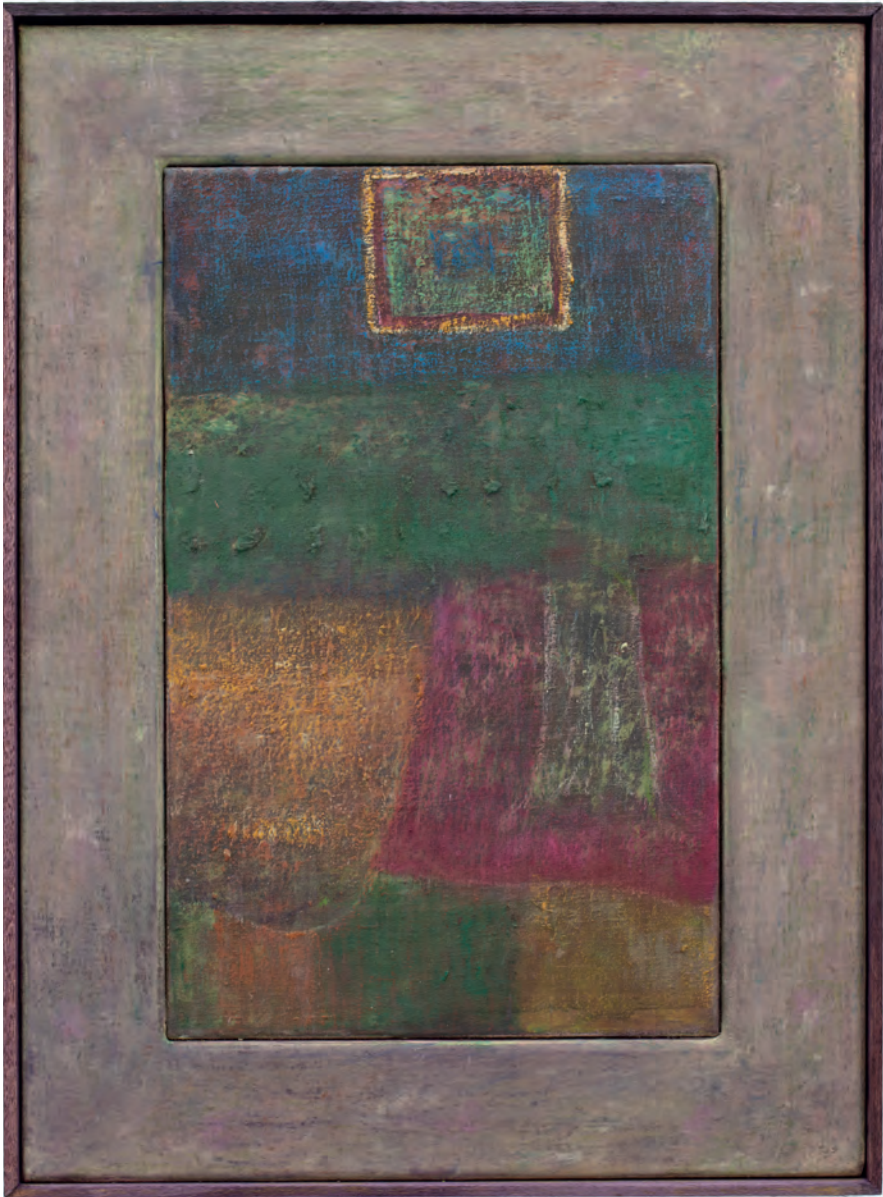
Right:
Intrappolata,
2026
Oil on canvas with
nails and wood
37 x 26 x 8 cm

Following spread:
Installation view of
Cuccurucucù, Tache,
London, 2026





Peeping Through,
2026
Oil on canvas, in
artist's frame
20 x 50 cm



Growing a Tree,
2026
Oil on canvas with
artist made frame
55 x 40 cm
(including frame)

Following spreads:
pp. 12–19
Installation view of
Cuccurucucù, Tache,
London, 2026









LOOKING AT THE PAINTINGS OF DIEN BERZIGA

Mark Hannam

Dien Berziga’s paintings enthrall the viewer with an enigmatic, dreamlike quality. They present an arrangement of objects and forms that have the sense of not yet being completed or, perhaps, objects and forms that were once complete but have now entered into a process of dissolution. These objects are present, but not fully so. And yet, at the same time, these paintings contain such a density of colour, such a tangible immediacy, that they generate a quality of consciousness that is quite unlike any resemblance of our sleeping states. When I look at these paintings, I am dreaming wide-awake.

In the Freudian tradition, dreamwork is described in terms of shifts of symbolic reference, like a mystery or puzzle that must be decoded before it can be understood. The operations of the dreaming mind are driven by real and determined forces in our unconsciousness, but which represent themselves to us through elusive transformations of meaning, as one object stands in the place of another, as if drawn from an alchemical rather than a mechanical system of symbolic reference. The dream elements are familiar, but their meaning is not immediately clear, it runs away from us however much we try to catch it. It is the comparable experience of being confronted by a series of colourful displacements – between what is already known, what remains unknown, and what might yet become known – that makes the act of looking at Berziga’s work feel curiously dreamish.

When the viewer steps-in close and looks at the details of the work, there are many signs and shapes that seem familiar from some of the great modernist painters of twentieth century Western art, although how Berziga deploys these marks is both original and intriguing. Sometimes, he makes use of small grid patterns of multicoloured squares, adding structure and colour to sections of his larger paintings. This form will be recognisable from certain works of Paul Klee – for example, *Picture of a City* (1921), *Crosses and Columns* (1931), and *New Harmony* (1936) - although in the works of Klee, these coloured grids dominate the whole painting, rather than being small details, marginal but nonetheless important, as they are in Berziga’s work. And Berziga’s use of repetitive diamond-shaped patterns, also in multiple colours, which sometimes appear to take the forms of distant moun-

tain ranges, and at other times the patterns of coats or jackets worn by ghostly figures, also remind the viewer of earlier works from a century ago. Picasso makes use of this device in many of his Harlequin paintings, and Christopher Wood adds colour and warmth to his *Self Portrait* (1927) by the diamond linked design of his sweater.

Likewise, in some of his works, Berziga creates a sense of energy and upward movement by the use of a repeated arc line. Sometimes these curved lines are detached from other objects within the painting and sometimes they are the emphasised boundaries of cloud-like shapes of colour. These are not dissimilar to some of the marks used by Kandinsky in works such as Moscow, *Red Square* (1916), or *Red Spot II* (1921), which helped to generate the liveliness and momentum of his early abstract works. The rainbow arc from Kandinsky's *Cossacks* (1910-11) also makes an appearance in some of Berziga's paintings, and the highlighting of formal grid patterns in certain sections of his work, hints at paintings made by Agnes Martin, or certain works by Bice Lazzari (whose Italian heritage, Berziga partially shares).

This is certainly not to say that Berziga's paintings look like copies or echoes of the work of previous generations. They do not. They are fresh, contemporary, and original works, but like all good paintings they draw upon the achievements of the past. These borrowed details connect Berziga's work to the modernist tradition, but what he does with them is his own unique achievement. When the viewer has enjoyed the close-up view – not just the shapes already described, but also, for example, the *impasto* marks laid upon the painted surface of the work, that absorb our attention because of their weight and texture - it is time to step back and consider the whole. What are these pictures about?

Berziga's work blends loose figurative objects with abstract motifs drawn from expressionist traditions. The linen is soaked with colours that bleed and blend into each other to create a saturated background of reds, pinks, purples, and aubergine. Overlaying these colours are curvaceous abstract shapes and forms – often painted using blues and greens, sometimes reds, and, very occasionally, yellows – that create the structural background of the paintings. Then there are the modernist pattern marks, the squares, diamonds, and grid shapes described above, dotted around the picture forming small intrusions of colour, creating additional formal structure, and helping to direct the navigation of the viewer's eyes around the image. And finally there are shadowy figurative objects, which might be: heads and bodies, sometimes faces; doors

and windows, sometimes buildings; hills and mountains, sometimes rivers and lakes; or which might not be any of these things.

The figurative objects in Berziga's work are never quite fully there, never manifest. They are hints of the presence of finished objects – of people or places – but they lack final definition, like a sentence that has been started but remains unfinished. How should we understand this impermanence, this incompleteness? One thought is that they might represent memories, of people and places in the artist's past, memories that perhaps might also stand for people and places in all of our pasts, whose continuing presence in our lives is partial, sustained by our acts of remembering that are themselves selective and imperfect. Another thought is that they might represent our desires, the desires of the artist or the desires of the viewer, not recollections of what has been, but projections of what might come to be, unstable and uncertain because we know that not all our wishes can come true.

These paintings, then, seem to speak both of the past and the future rather than the present. They disavow the finished immediacy of the now, and instead they provoke the viewer to look backwards and forwards in time, to what is less fixed, less certain, less defined. To borrow a title from Paul Gauguin, I think Berziga's work asks the viewer, *where do we come from, what are we, and where are we going*, but he places the greatest emphasis on the first and the third of these questions.

Late spring. A scholar sits in his study.

After much contemplation

He lends his brush the ideal pressure -

Leaves his mind there, on the paper.

Drawn with a very fine camelhair brush.

Sarah Howe

For some Chinese artists, their engagement with painting starts when they learn to write. Zao Wou-Ki, for example, spoke of the period of his early childhood, when the rote repetition of lines and dots made by brush and ink, under the close guidance of his grandfather, formed an essential part of his education: "Calligraphy" he said, "is the original source and only guide for my painting." But writing is not

painting, and the calligraphic elements that appear in some of Zao's paintings made in the late-1950s are best understood not as inscriptions but rather as the evolution of his language of mark-making: he transformed his hard-learned skill in drawing letters into a form of painterly gesture that gave structure and distinction to his work. Like those artists working in the contemporary Western tradition who make use of script as part of their painting practice - Cy Twombly, Sarah Grilo, and Anselm Kiefer, for example – Zao is painting signs not sentences. Berziga says that he struggled with calligraphy at school – "my letters were the worst in my class!" – although he has a sense that some of the marks he now makes in his paintings do draw upon the classical Chinese calligraphic tradition, which forms another part of his artistic heritage.

What all painting - and not just painting influenced by calligraphy – shares with all writing is, as the poet Sarah Howe describes in the lines above, the act of leaving our mind there on the paper, or the canvas, or the screen. Painters and authors are both engaged in the work of externalising and documenting their mental experiences, giving physical expression to their thoughts, their feelings, and their sensations. They are engaged in the work of transporting meanings, from their origin in the privacy of our personal mental space, supervenient on the workings of our neural networks, out into shared material forms that circulate among our community networks. Painting and the text are two diverse ways in which we might leave our minds in public spaces.

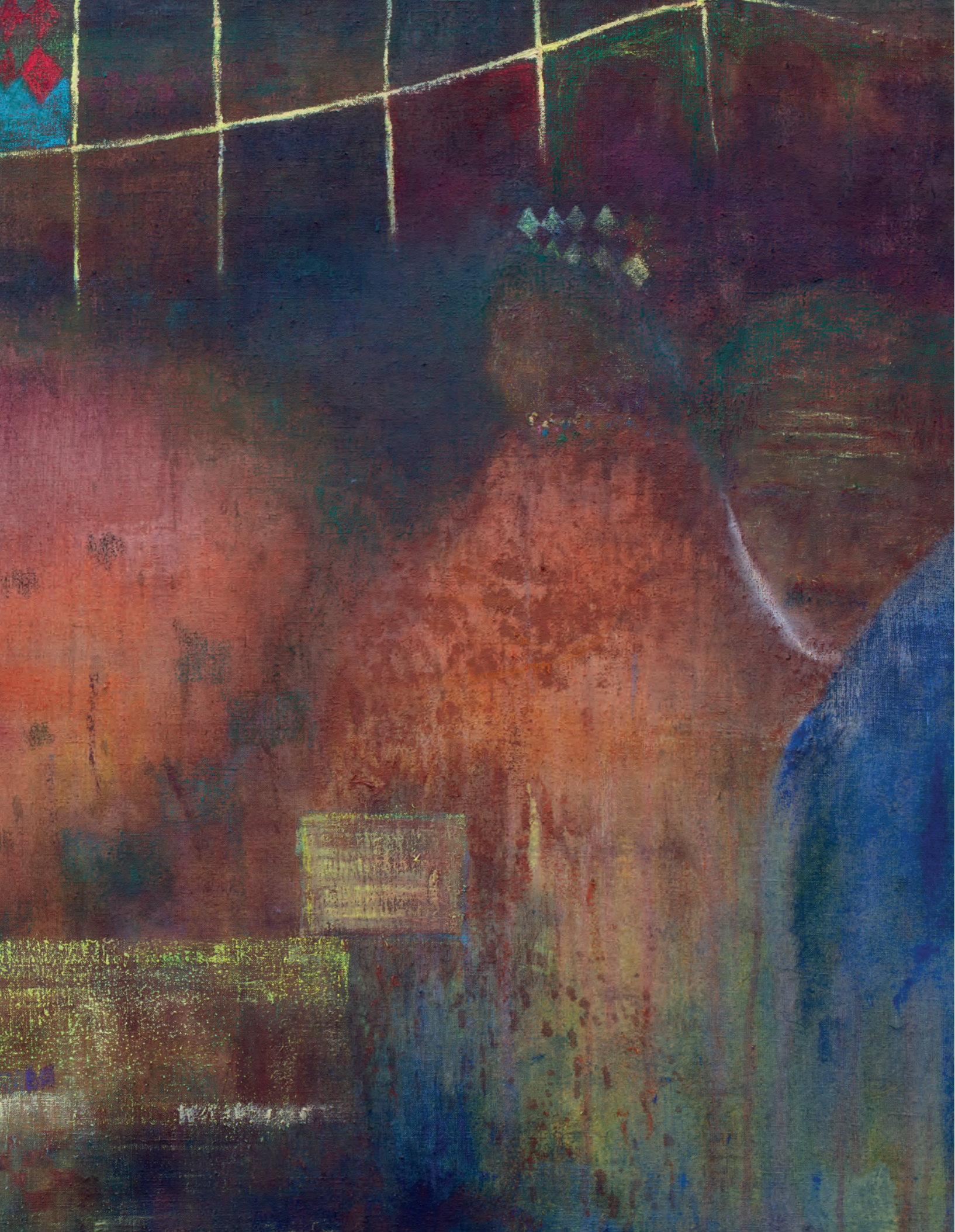
In a famous essay from 1968, Roland Barthes described the *Death of the Author* and argued against the authority of authorship: "We know now" he wrote, "that a text is not a line of words releasing a single 'theological' meaning ... but a multi-dimensional space in which a variety of writings, none of them original, blend and clash." He went on to describe the reader as "the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text's unity lies not in its origin but in its destination." And what is true of authors and texts is likely also to be true of painters and pictures.

Beyond his characteristic exaggerations and overstatements, Barthes makes an interesting and helpful point, namely that the reception of a work – whether a text or a painting – helps to determine its meaning, and that the reader or the viewer contributes to the developing understanding of what the work is about. While the author or the artist will have their own meanings in mind during the act of creative production, these cannot ever be wholly known.

And in any case, interpreting paintings or novels

reductively, solely as acts of personal confession, loses the wider sense of their value as acts of public engagement. Rather than guess what the artist 'meant to say', the better choice for the viewer is to take the artwork as a stimulus - in some cases as a direct provocation – for their own self-reflection: it is what the viewer sees in the work that matters, and how this act of seeing connects with their own memories and desires.

Dien Berziga's paintings are models of authorial ambiguity: they provide sufficient form, figure, and colour to engage and stimulate, but leave amply sufficient unstructured, undetermined space in which to allow our thoughts the room to wander where they will. His paintings encourage meandering thoughts, untutored reflections, and personal reverie. He has lent his brush the ideal pressure, and left his mind there, on the linen. But as we stand in front of his paintings and enjoy them, we must bring our own minds to the viewing.



Watching a Rainbow Field Grow,
2026
Oil on canvas
152 x 152 cm



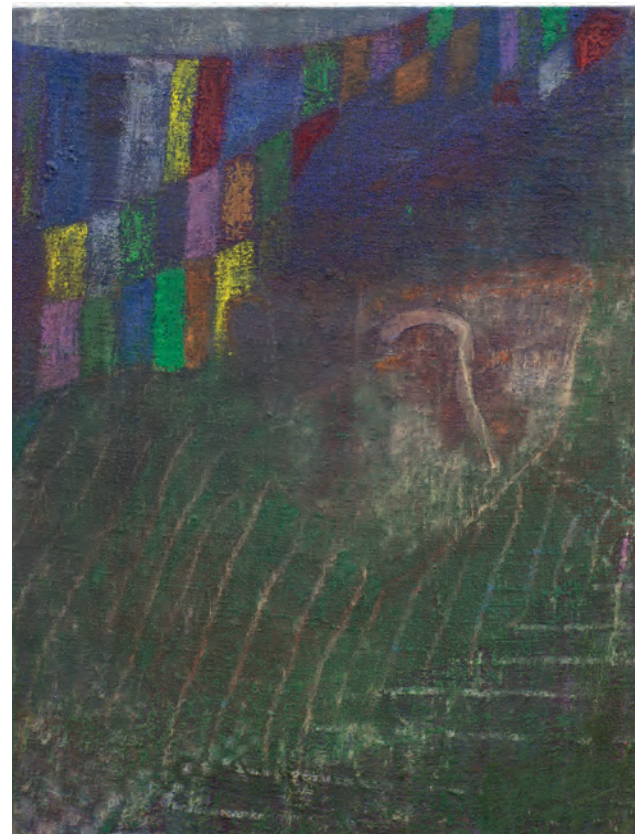
Echoes Through the Bricks,
2026
Oil on canvas
110 x 120 cm

Following spread:
Installation view of
Cuccurucucù, Tache,
London, 2026





Stone Wall,
2026
Oil on canvas
46 x 61 cm



Runner,
2026
Oil on canvas
40 x 30 cm



Giostra,
2026
Oil on canvas
78 x 61 cm

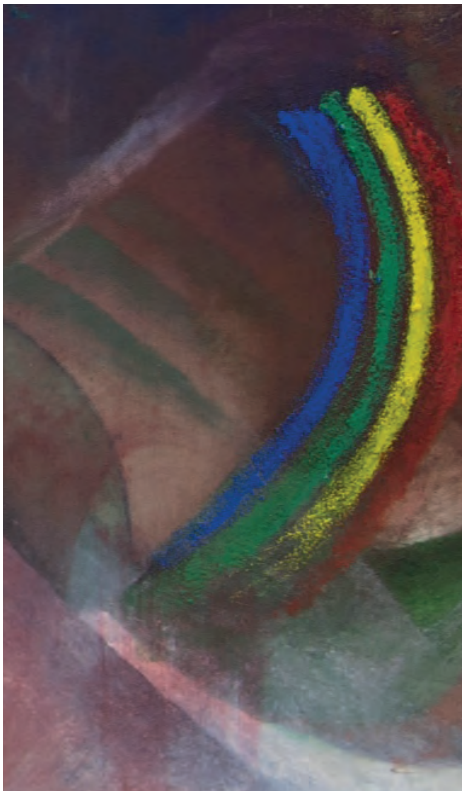
Following spread:
Installation view of
Cuccurucucù, Tache,
London, 2026



pp. 36-47
I, of Every Colour,
2026
Oil on canvas
160 x 300 cm







Ana Teles, London, 12 April 2026

This interview took place in Dien Berziga’s studio at Thames-Side Studios in Woolwich. At the time he was painting for several upcoming exhibitions, including *Cuccurucucù*. The conversation was informed by the many paintings and objects present in his studio in various states of making.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.

AT How did your encounter with painting begin?

DB I grew up in Parma. Paintings were everywhere, on ceilings, in historical buildings, in murals. Those ceilings were my first encounters with painting.

My grandmother also encouraged me to paint. We had printed templates, patterns with outlines you could fill with watercolour. She’d sit next to me, painting her sheet while I painted mine. These were often oriental or Indian-inspired patterns she’d collected while travelling. She spent time in India. That’s how I first learned to mix water and pigment and brush it on.

I was about six when I started with watercolours. Later, around 16, I began copying paintings: Italian, Dutch, whatever I could access. I’d take photos in churches or museums, use books and, later, the internet. Copying was my first step into painting.

AT Your grandmother seems to have been an important figure in your life. How did she influence the way you see things today, the objects around you?

DB She was a beautiful person who could find beautiful things in the cheapest way. Most of what I had were one- or two-pound thrifted things that she found and curated for me.

That sensibility has stayed with me. I want things that are dirty and old. I’m not interested in perfectly clean, new things. I like things that have already been worn because they carry time, someone else’s story. They deserve to be celebrated instead of thrown away. If I find a t-shirt in the bin, I’ll take it, wash it, and wear it. That’s something I embrace.

AT What's the connection between the way you treat objects and the way you approach your paintings?

DB Paintings also go through long cycles of dismantling and repair with the objects I have. Fundamentally, in painting, I want to capture as many things as I can – mentally, spiritually, emotionally – and plug them into the surface, just like I plug found objects into my surroundings. That's the direct link: I'm putting as much as I can of myself and my experiences into that surface.

AT What do you mean by “as many things as I can”?

DB Layer as many things as I can, until there is something to preserve. I paint until there's something there to be preserved. It's almost like an excavation site. I keep excavating until I discover something, and then I leave it. Until I find that thing I want to preserve, I keep working with washes, thin marks, charcoal, and so on.

AT How long does it take you to find something you want to preserve?

DB It really depends. Sometimes I keep working and realise, I can't find anything, and then a large painting gets cut down and cut down again, until it becomes a tiny fragment. There's no set way of finding the 'thing'.

Everything happens quite naturally in the painting process. Sometimes I destroy parts. I paint, and then suddenly it doesn't work anymore; I tear it apart, and over the years it becomes smaller paintings.

I see the studio as an ecosystem, I recycle and reuse everything, trying not to waste. Everything is growing or decaying at the same time, but never truly wasted.

AT When you start a canvas, do you know what you're looking for?

DB The thinking happens through my eyes, not in my head. I rarely know exactly what I'm looking for when I start a canvas. Most paintings don't have a fixed image in advance. I start with washes (thin acrylic or oil) and in that early stage nothing is fixed. The canvas is in flux and also empty.

To the Boom,
2026
Oil on wood with
PETG and plaster
65 x 35 x 5 cm



DB As I keep working, things start to emerge: a figure, a window corner, a fragment of narrative. I'm not constructing a painting according to a plan; I'm recognising elements in the surface. My eyes are constantly scanning, like on an excavation site.

What I recognise is related to what I've experienced recently, what's happening around me, what I hear in the news. I don't fix those things in advance; they just remain in my head as residues of daily life. Everything, information, stories, images, is like the objects I find: I embrace it all.

For example, the 'missile' painting: the top part was originally meant to be something like a birdhouse. Over time, I suddenly saw that it could be a missile head, with missiles launching. That wasn't planned,

but once I recognised it, it became part of the work. I'm not a political painter, but I want these things to be part of my way of living, which means I'm never out of ideas. The world is producing so much, all the time.

After Wild Grass,
2026
Detail view
Oil on canvas
250 x 170 cm



AT What or who are the figures you paint? What function do the figures serve, and when do they appear in your process?

DB They appear at every stage, and very often they get buried. It's rare that something from the first wash simply survives untouched. It's a continuous discovery and re-emergence. And it's not always a person; it can be an animal, an object. For me, objects have life too, so let's call them all 'living things'.

What they do is guide my thinking entirely. These living elements set up almost-narratives: a sense that something is about to happen, or is happening, or has already happened. But the narrative is never fixed. I never really know where it's heading, and often I don't know either. When I paint them I have certain memories or associations, but nothing fully defined.

AT You were showing me the back of the painting. You use tacks instead of staples. Can you explain your choice, since staples are much more practical and cheaper?

DB I use tacks because they have an interesting shape and an uneven, human quality. Historically, before staple guns, everything was tacked. For me, using tacks is a way of respecting painting and art history.

But the tacks are part of something larger, a set of standards that begin before I even think about the front: the way I stretch the canvas, the way I prime it, the wood I choose, the stretcher bars, the way I stretch the linen. These are almost commands I give myself. Before a painting leaves the studio, I paint the back with acrylic to seal and strengthen the canvas – like washing and ironing a school uniform before a child goes to school.

They're barely noticeable, but for me, they're important. Painting, for me, is an object: the front, the back, the sides, the inner structure – all of it together is the painting. I take full ownership of that. These are almost sacred objects in my head.

AT And what about standards for the surface itself?

DB I definitely have standards for the painted surface, though they're very personal. Surface quality is important, but everyone has their own idea of it. I'm not interested in a perfectly smooth, clean colour. I'm interested in the human touch: how my hands interact with the material: cotton, linen, or board. That interaction is the standard.

My understanding of surface is to do with a painter's unique materiality: each painter has a different surface, depending on how they like to use paint and how familiar they are with it.

AT Where do these standards come from?

DB They come from looking backwards, at art history, but also from my personal history. I started buying antiques when I was about 16-17. I was interested in old paintings, so I bought damaged ones, because they were affordable. After school trips to museums like the Met, I became fascinated by cracked surfaces and old heritage. I discovered tacks when I dismantled

my first damaged painting. So I learned by observing what I had in my hands. Those old paintings and those observations became my standards.

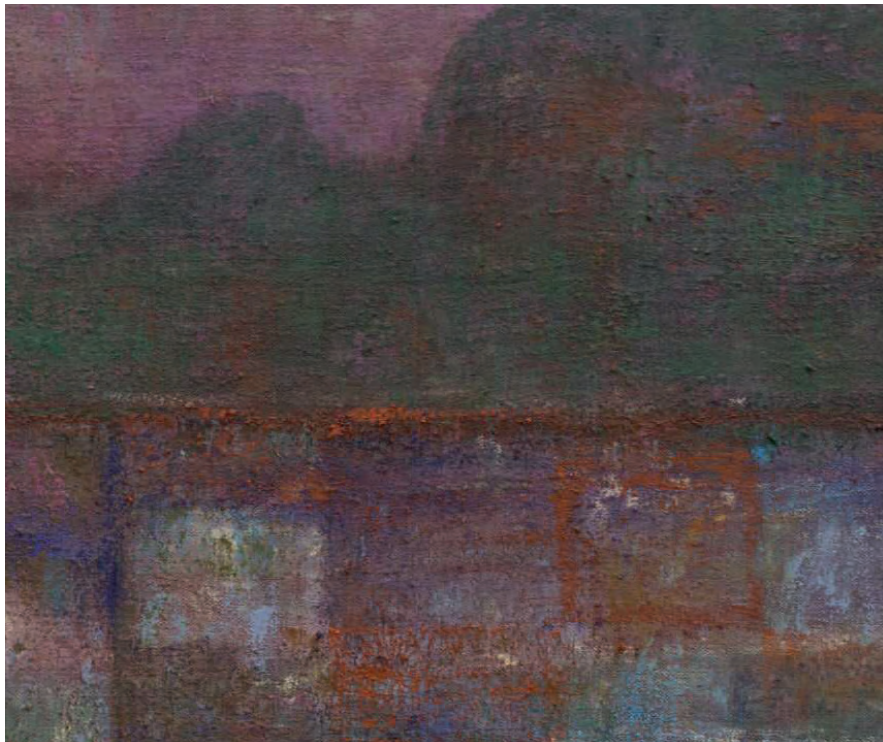
AT What artists do you like and how have they influenced your development?

DB I'm drawn to artists whose visual qualities feel close to what I do. If someone's surface treatment or visual language resonates with mine, I'm naturally more drawn to them. One artist I've been looking at recently is Mohammed Sami. He paints with acrylics and creates an almost eroded surface. The work is narrative in some sense, not telling a clear story, but with a sense that something is happening.

I also admire Peter Doig. His use of washes is something I relate to, since I started working with washes early in my practice. And I love Chris Ofili's paintings for their sense of innocence, though obviously the work is dealing with things that come from very difficult places. Innocence emerging from a difficult starting point. It's a strange thing to try to describe.

AT Where does your sense of colour come from?

DB My palette is quite specific, almost Italian, quite 'Parmesan' in a way. It comes from the colours of



Stone Wall,
2026
Detail view
Oil on canvas
46 x 61 cm

Italian buildings, colours I grew up with and saw on walls every day. But it also comes from elsewhere. In China, for instance, I did a particular painting using a very Chinese red: a brownish-purple red, somewhere between Venetian red and purple. The Forbidden City has those red walls, and that colour stayed with me. A lot of my relationship with colour works like that, it comes from what I've seen, what I've lived with. These colours stick in my hand, in my body. Then I search for them again on the canvas.

That said, colour is always relative. The colour I see here in the studio under this skylight is totally different from what you see in a gallery under artificial light. And colour is always relative to what's next to it, the red I use in one context will look entirely different if another painting is placed beside it.

AT When you talk about colour, you often talk about depth. What does that mean in practice?

DB When I want a red, I don't just want a flat red straight from the tube. The red I'm really looking for is built up through layers, under it I'll have a glaze of white, a glaze of blue, a glaze of purple, a glaze of yellow. What you then see as 'red' is the result of light travelling through and reflecting back from all those layers.

AT What is the biggest mistake you think you could make when painting?

DB I lose myself a lot in paintings, and when that happens I start ripping canvases off. Sometimes I regret it. But that destruction inevitably becomes something more interesting. So I consider losing control a big mistake, but a beautiful one.

The most interesting marks, the most interesting conversations I have with a painting, happen in that state when I'm absolutely not sure what's happening and I'm worrying whether I'll be able to regain control. Very often that's when something really emerges.

AT And when you do lose control, what do you tend to do?

DB I go into what I'd call 'rescue mode'. I want to bring the painting back. But I also test a lot. Sometimes those tests don't go the way I want, and then it's time to flip the canvas. I test marks that feel riskier, things that might break the structure, decisions that could make a painting fail, but also open new possibilities.

Because when you're playing it safe, especially when there's a lot of geometry involved, very little of interest is happening. That's the only way to really lose control.

AT How do you decide when a painting is finished?

DB A painting needs to feel familiar and intimate to me. If it connects to my life and existence, then it matters enough to finish. My studio is built around that process, registering and recalling material into a personal language. A kind of visual notebook.

AT So who are you painting for? Who is the viewer of your work?

DB At the moment, I paint primarily for myself. I need to feed myself with these images. But yes, I also share them and worry whether they're good or bad.

I don't have a specific, targeted audience. In a way, everyone is the perfect viewer, because everyone brings a different background and understanding. As a young artist, I'm very interested in those differences. That's why the show in Milan was important: Italy has such a strong traditional standard of beauty: symmetry, polish, perfection. My surfaces are rough, imperfect, processual. I was curious how Italians would see them, whether they'd think I have 'no standards' or that I don't know what I'm doing.

I'm interested in those tensions, because my work often exists in between: between abstraction and figuration, between finished and unfinished. I want to capture that moment when something is emerging and dissolving at the same time.

AT Why are you interested in this state of in-betweenness and lack of definition?

DB In a slightly kitsch way, it goes back to childhood questions like "Are you Italian or Chinese?" I grew up refusing to be easily defined. My paintings have inherited that uncertainty.

And also, because the process itself has very few fixed structures, the end result is a residue of that process: it naturally stays somewhat undefined, transitional. Early on I made more clearly figurative works; later, I became more interested in enlarging fragments, like

Growing a Tree,
2026
Oil on canvas with
artist made frame
55 x 40 cm
(including frame)



skin or flesh, until they almost became abstract. So I'm also personally in a state of transition between figuration and abstraction.

There are also many people in my pictures, because people are central in my life. I'm surrounded by people I love and who love me, and they play a big part in my questions and experiences. The figures aren't usually specific individuals, but they are shaped by the people around me.

AT Where are you in the paintings? How do you see yourself in your work?

DB I don't think a single painting can define who I am. It's more about an ongoing presence. These paintings are archival: layers of thought, of my inner life. A constant dotting of presence.

My presence comes through in the exhibition rather than in one painting. 'Me' doesn't exist in a single surface, it exists in the links between two, three, four, five paintings in a show. That's where I ground myself. That's why I love exhibitions.

Even when I don't have a formal show, I'll hang the work as if for one, because it lets me see myself. The making of each painting is non-linear, heavily interrupted. But in a show, when I bring together pieces from different periods, I can erase that non-linearity and see a whole picture. A single painting is too fragmented for me to fully remember myself in it.

AT Looking at your recent paintings compared to the ones before your residency in China, I think they've changed. They hold together more as a whole. Earlier works are more fragmentary, almost like two different realities sitting on top of each other rather than integrating. How do you see this shift?

DB I think I literally learned about painting in China. In Shenzhen, I could stay in the studio for long hours without interruption, food was delivered, I never had to leave. It was a dream, though it became draining in the end. But that intensity made me test a lot of different structures, and when I came back I felt like a different version of myself, able to approach painting differently.

But I should also say, I'm not interested in having all my paintings look coherent. I want them to be as different as possible. But over time I've started to notice

a way of painting that feels most natural to me. That's probably what you're seeing.

(Dien pauses and gestures toward one of his paintings.)

DB I've actually started to really like this one. At first I felt something was missing, but now it feels complete. The funny thing is I hadn't properly seen it for days, it was covered, and I kept walking past only noticing the top half. I couldn't remember what I'd done at the bottom, so each time I imagined something different. Today I finally uncovered it and thought, oh, I'd completely forgotten these marks. Last week was so packed with the delivery, and I finished this the night before everything was packed. What stayed in my mind was the earlier version, not these final touches that turned parts of the pattern into people. Seeing it again now, I like it. It makes sense.

The Rainbow Party,
2026
Oil on canvas
250 x 140 cm



CUCCURUCUCÙ: A REFRAIN IN PAINT

Catherine Li

I never receive a fixed answer whenever I ask Dien Berziga where the images in his paintings come from. The most straightforward response is usually something like: they appear, he sees them, and therefore there is an image. This sounds almost too convenient, as if the painting has arrived by accident and the artist only has to recognise its significance afterwards. But, perhaps, the difficulty of answering is not a failure of explanation. Perhaps it is closer to the actual condition of the paintings themselves. Berziga’s images do not seem to begin from a programme, a symbol, or a story waiting to be illustrated. They arrive through looking, through the delayed return of things seen, absorbed and half-remembered.

One way into this process came through a song. *Cuccurucucù* is one of Berziga’s favourite Italian songs, for which he didn’t discover it deliberately, but because it was already there, circulating around him during his childhood in Parma. Written by Franco Battiato and released on *La voce del padrone* in 1981, the song belongs to a moment when Battiato’s experimental habits entered a more popular form. Its title and refrain rework Tomás Méndez’s Mexican song *Cucurrucucú paloma*, carrying with them the sound of longing, love-sickness, and the dove-call, but Battiato places this familiar refrain inside a more fractured and ironic song-world.

I listened to the song without understanding a word of Italian. This meant that I could not follow the lyrics as argument or narrative; I could only receive the song as rhythm, tone, atmosphere, and surface. It felt playful, light, and oddly familiar, as if I had heard it before, or had heard many things like it before without knowing where they belonged. The repeated *cuccurucucù*, as a melodic onomatopoeia, became a portal into a strange but comfortable world, full of things that carried no direct meaning for me. This is close to my experience of looking at Berziga’s paintings. I am immediately drawn into the rhythm of the surface before I understand a single “lyric” of the image. There is almost a physiological recognition: a precise feeling of knowing nothing, and yet feeling completely held by that not-knowing. This kind of not-knowing feels increasingly rare in a moment when everything is over-explained, over-captioned, and immediately turned into information, hence



Long Return,
2026
Oil on canvas
183 x 230 cm

there is something liberating about pure listening and pure looking. This is where Susan Sontag’s call for “an erotics of art” rather than a hermeneutics becomes useful: not as a rejection of thought, but as a reminder that interpretation should not replace the sensuous encounter with the work.

Segments

With Berziga’s painting, a line-by-line reading is not useful, because the painting is never built as one continuous story. It is closer to a chain of arrivals: youth, domestic memory, school, playgrounds, old buildings, landscapes, fragments of people, of cities, and cultural debris from Parma, Beijing, Sanya, and London. These elements are not arranged into narrative sequences; they surface in parts, more like “segments”, each a visible portion of a larger and less stable whole. Across the surface, hazy figures appear alongside more distinct dots, lines, and shapes. Some resemble beads on a string; others gather in irregular clusters or move across the canvas like a stream of ants. However, their movement does not feel processive, but feels cyclical, as if the painting repeatedly arrives at its own beginning. The lumpy shapes that have become increasingly present in Berziga’s recent works, they are floated, nested, rhomboid, square, rounded, mysteriously arranged. As pure abstraction with no participation in the narrative, they witness our vision finding somewhere to land. This reminds me of Wassily Kandinsky’s words in his *Concerning the Spiritual in Art* (Part II: “About Painting”, 1910): “The tendency of a work of art may be very simple, but provided it is not dictated by any external motive and provided it is not working to any material end, the harmony will be pure. [...] It is the conviction that nothing mysterious can ever happen in our everyday life that has destroyed the joy of abstract thought.” I am learning and practising the simplest act in front of Berziga’s paintings: to look, and to trust forms, movement, and colours as visual knobs and anchors within the painting’s shifting field. Despite Berziga’s inclination towards figuration, these shapes keep pulling the painting away from easy recognition, not enough to become illustration, but enough to make the surface feel inhabited.

Battiato’s song helps because it works through a similar logic of return. The refrain is comic, catchy, and almost childish, but each time it returns, it also behaves like a memory trigger. Around it, the song piles up fragments: childhood, cultural references, quotations, historical images, bits of other songs. Instead of narrating memories in order, it stages the

way memory actually arrives, suddenly and sideways, through scraps of sound that once surrounded the listener. The self in the song is therefore not private in any pure sense; it is made from what it has heard. Berziga’s paintings operate in a comparable way: they show how the self has been composed by repeated, almost unwilling exposure. A building, a song, a colour, a game, a landscape, a tragedy seen from afar, a texture remembered from childhood: all of these can enter the painting without hierarchy. The work is personal, but not because it tells us private stories of one person; it is personal because it records the particular way the world has passed through one person.

Long Return,
2026
Detail view
Oil on canvas
183 x 230 cm



Painting, and keeping on painting

Like the catchy refrain of *Cuccurucucù*, which lingers in the mind and returns almost involuntarily even in the most uneventful stretches of daily life, painting has become for Berziga something similarly inseparable from ordinary existence. It is no longer merely an action repeated over time, but a rhythm of being, an everyday routine so absolute that it almost disappears into habit. His studio bears witness to this condition everywhere: in the constant residue of work, in the surfaces that have been tested, stained, abandoned, resumed, and in the sheer evidence of time spent there. Daily persistence and long uninterrupted periods inside the studio, have produced in him an immediacy with materials that can appear almost matter-of-fact. He picks up the brush and begins to paint, with the same apparent plainness and immediacy with which one picks up chopsticks to eat. This is not to say that painting comes to him without difficulty; what matters is the force of habit, because habit here produces intimacy. It gives him such closeness to the material that the most unconscious, the most immediate, and perhaps also the most truthful movements of thought can pass rapidly into form, almost as if pulled by gravity. This is also what grants him a more radical freedom.

The force of this repeated and almost compulsive activity gives Berziga’s practice its peculiar tension: excessive in accumulation, minimal in gesture. Painting occupies his practice abundantly, and it does so across a range of surfaces without asking permission from medium-specific rules. Linen, ceramic, timber, metal: each can become a site for paint if the work demands it. What matters is “inner necessity”; as Kandinsky writes, the artist “may use any form which his expression demands”. For someone who, since childhood, has related to the world through making and handling, oil paint has remained the most beloved material because of its extraordinary pliancy, a substance capable of being reworked without losing its sensual immediacy. It is still his most sophisticated toy. This is also what I find difficult and compelling when working with him as a curator: how to make visible not only the disclosed paintings, but the larger possibility of life being enveloped by painting, of painting becoming a condition that exceeds the canvas and reorganises the relation between body, studio, material, and time. In Berziga’s works, the very large and the very small, the predictable and the unforeseeable, all encounter one another within the same spatial field. The paintings do not present a kingdom ruled by artistic intention

from above. They open a space in which the artist, to borrow again from Kandinsky, is less a sovereign than a servant of something higher, a necessity that passes through him rather than belonging entirely to him.

A realist

Once, in our conversation about how artists respond to their surroundings and to the social concerns of their time, Berziga described himself as a machine: a machine with wide eyes and a big mouth, constantly looking, noticing, and absorbing whatever comes towards him. I keep thinking about this image, because it refuses the romantic idea of the painter as someone who invents a world entirely from within. Berziga's painting is not sealed inside imagination; it is open-mouthed, and it takes things in. The canvas becomes a projectable surface where fragments can be recollected, distorted and recomposed. His job as a painter is not to explain where each fragment comes from, but to turn the pressure of accumulation into form. This understanding follows the process rather than preceding it: Berziga follows the movement of paint first, and only afterwards begins to see images within it, as if cloud-watching inside the material.

This is why I would call him a realist, though not in the conventional sense of someone who depicts things accurately, but as someone who registers the actual disorder of perception: the way beauty and violence, high culture and low culture, childhood and history, comedy and grief can all exist side by side without waiting to be sorted into meaning. The colour and texture of Berziga's paintings also come from this long experience of looking and image-collecting, where old buildings, ordinary objects, weathered surfaces, decorative fragments, and public spaces encountered while growing up are retained less as clear memories than as material habits. This is another connection with Battiato's *Cuccurucucù*, whose texture is built from songs that once surrounded him, and in both cases the self is scattered across these materials, made from what it has heard and seen. That is why both the song and Berziga's painting feel intimate and impersonal at once, held in the tension between surface brightness and inner estrangement: melodic, rhythmic, and even fun on the surface, but underneath full of distance, in which the speaker never settles, and images and figures keep passing by.

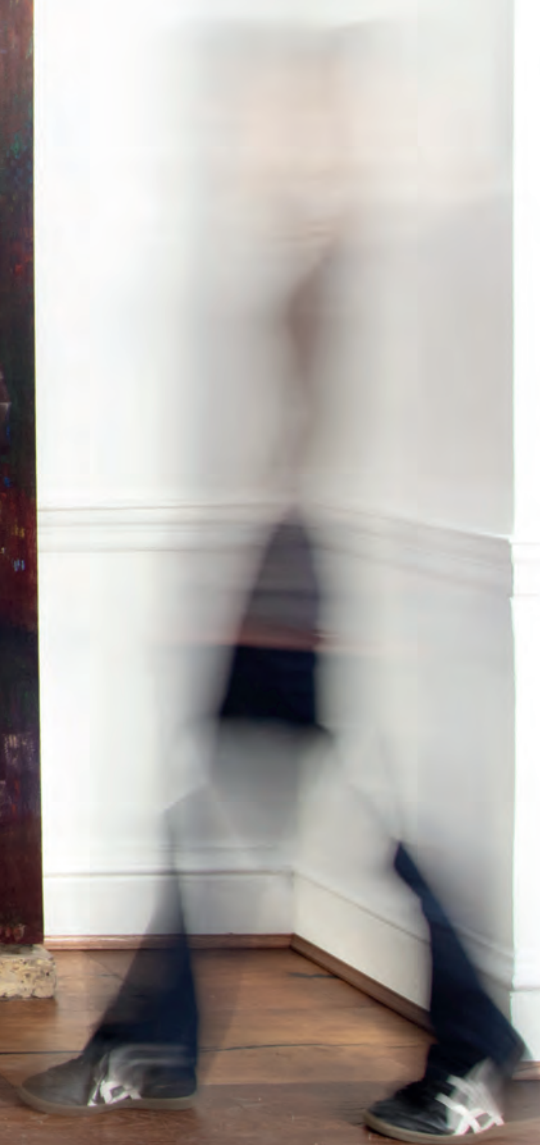
Berziga's work is not expressive in the usual confessional way. It does not ask us to locate a feeling and name it. The paintings carry something larger and less stable than emotion, not a fling of feeling, but the per-

sistence of what has been retained and transformed: a proof of being. Berziga depicts the world around him with an almost unwavering simplicity, the simplicity of things that have been absorbed so deeply they no longer need to announce their meaning. In paint, the most ordinary fragments become vibrant again, like a field of wild grass that keeps growing after the event has passed.

After Wild Grass,
2026
Oil on canvas
250 x 170 cm

Following spread:
Installation view of
Cuccurucucù, Tache,
London, 2026







Installation view of
Cuccurucucù, Tache,
London, 2026



*A Struggle with
some Pigeons,*
2025
Oil on canvas with
nails and wood
49 x 41 x 6cm

Pinocchio!,
2025
Oil on canvas with
PETG, plaster and wood,
in artist's frame
40 x 24 x 17 cm





Grand River,
2026
Oil on canvas
170 x 250cm



Leaving a Rainbow Party,
2026
Oil on canvas
45 x 80 cm



Rainbow Girl,
2026
Oil on canvas with timber
55 x 24 cm



The Other Side of Hope,
2025
Oil on canvas
160 x 300 cm



Wanderer,
2025
Linen, PETG, plaster
and wood
28 x 28 x 15 cm



*Shooting myself in the foot,
Twice,*
2025
Oil on linen with timber
66 x 26 x 15 cm



L'Asino,
2026
Oil on wood with
PETG and plaster
80 x 50 cm



BIOGRAPHY

Dien Berziga (b. 2001, Beijing, China) is a Chinese-Italian artist based in South London.

Central to Berziga's artistic approach lies a profound fascination with materiality. His multidisciplinary methodology integrates painting, digital collage and 3D printing with found materials. His use of 3D-printed frames, inspired by architectural forms encountered daily, serve as integral extensions of the painted narrative, inviting viewers to reflect on the structures we inhabit and how these spaces shape our perceptions. By transforming everyday encounters into intimate, cherished objects, Berziga's work resonates with the deeply personal yet universal rhythm of urban life.

Through the juxtaposition of traditional art forms and techniques alongside digital technologies, Berziga's work converses at once with eras bygone and the contemporary moment, the handcrafted and the machine realm. The paintings possess an air of childlike wonder, naivety framed in structures parsed from the ecclesiastical iconography of the medieval period and the global architectures of communal sites of worship. This interplay between the aesthetics of innocence and those of arithmetical refinement mirrors the broader tensions with which Berziga works – a tightrope balance of spontaneity and control, experimentation and precision, the historied and the potential.

Surface and texture play a defining role in Berziga's painting. Employing latex and impasto as agents of construction, he renders the canvas a site of palimpsest; a substrate upon which language is transcribed in pigment, and speaks in tactility.

Berziga graduated with a BA in Fine Art from Central Saint Martins, London, in 2023. In 2026 he presented work at Mega Art Fair, Milan, with Studio/Chapple, and opened his first gallery solo exhibition with Tache.



ABOUT TACHE

Tache is a contemporary gallery in Fitzrovia, London, with a focused programme exhibiting the works of emerging artists.

Established in 2025, the gallery has exhibited works by artists including Dien Berziga, Naomi Boiko-Stapleton, Alice Delhanty, Lily Hargreaves, Chunkook Lee, Amélie Mckee, Grace McNerney, Hiromi Murai, Melle Nieling, Léa Porré, Estelle Simpson and Alison Wing Yin Poon. Across solo and group exhibitions, Tache's programme is shaped by practices with an experimental approach to materiality.

Tache is currently based at 33 Percy Street, and in September 2026 will relocate to an expanded premises at 36 Newman Street.

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CUCCURUCUCÙ

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Cuccurucucù

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