

Dipped Paintings

Oliver Jeffers



October 3, 2025 to November 8, 2025

Opening Reception: October 3 from 6 to 8 pm

(Brookline, MA – September 9, 2025) Praise Shadows is honored to announce the North American presentation of *Dipped Paintings* by Oliver Jeffers, the first focused exhibition of this body of work since it began in 2012. This marks the beginning of a two-year winddown, as the artist will conclude the series in his upcoming solo exhibition at the Ulster Museum in Belfast, Northern Ireland in 2027. Only a handful of new paintings – and their related dip performances – will be made over the next two years, with one debuting at the Boston exhibition. A small group present for a private dip performance will see the portrait in its originally painted entirety. By the time the exhibition opens to the public, the only documentation of the complete and uninterrupted portrait will be in the memories of those present as it was dipped.

This exhibition will feature older paintings, including the first from this series, titled *Without a Doubt Pt. 2* (2012), on view at the Brooklyn Museum from 2012-2013. In a full-circle moment, Jeffers opens a solo exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum, *Life at Sea*, on September 19.

For much of his career, Jeffers has used figurative painting to explore scientific thought. He originally focused on the three classic types of figurative painting – landscape, still life, and

portraiture – but ultimately, it was portraiture that held his interest. He was initially driven by an interest in exploring theories such as the uncertainty principle and hidden variable theory, the latter of which postulates that forces unknown to us still have impact and must therefore be taken into account. In response to this idea, the artist began to distort his work by hiding it.

A major component of the dipped series began with an accident. Prior to dipping the first piece, Jeffers was so preoccupied with the mechanics of the process that he did not think to document the pre-enameled work. A full calendar year passed before the only photograph of the un-dipped work was discovered. Upon first seeing this picture, the artist was surprised that his memory of the painting did not match what he saw in this photograph. Around the same time, he experienced a similar emotional reaction when comparing stories about his mother, who had passed a decade earlier. Jeffers found that his brother's retelling of an experience differed from his own recollection of the same story.

The sitters for Jeffers' portraits are unified by the experience of having witnessed death close at hand. The sitters are interviewed by Jeffers and asked to look introspectively at their experiences of loss, mortality, storytelling, memory and change, as well as toward the unknown future. The information from these conversations then dictates the composition of their portrait. At the time of the dipping, the canvas is already attached to a reclaimed frame, and they are submerged together. The paint coating both frame and canvas speaks to the totality and finality of the action. Each repurposed frame is imbued with its own history and memory, adding yet another dimension to the tale.

Small groups of individuals are invited to participate in the project by acting as witnesses to the dipping process, the first, last, and only people to ever see the full portrait. Jeffers and assistants then fill a custom built box with up to 30 gallons of colored enamel paint. The painting is removed from its original hanging place and submerged. Before it is lifted out of the bath of paint, a large sheet of heavy artist paper is laid behind the custom box. In the middle of these sheets of paper, Jeffers has handwritten several hundred words, excerpts from the sitter's interview which informed the painting. As the portrait is moved from the box to a suspended hanging rig a few feet back, the paper also becomes obscured as it catches the falling drips of paint. The performance itself lasts no more than ten minutes per painting.

No photographs are ever taken of the portraits prior to their immersion into enamel. The artist paints each alone in his studio, keeping them veiled at all other times. Those present for the performance are the only people to ever view the paintings. Their role is to bear witness, and their testimonies become the sole archives of each portrait's unobscured state. At the culmination of the dipping, participants are also asked to join the artist in a toast over a drink of whiskey. This act is reminiscent of the traditional way, in Irish culture, to send off a friend or loved one in death, or welcome a new child into the world. The toast, created by the artist, states 'what is done is done, and what is yet to come'. It is meant to draw attention to the uniqueness of this, and every moment.

As they leave the space of the performance everyone is given a memento: a photographic artifact that has been dipped in the same enamel paint. This practice has generated a sub-series titled *Dipped Photo Clusters*, examples of which will also be on view in this exhibition.

About the artist

Oliver Jeffers MBE (b.1977, lives in Belfast and Brooklyn, NY) is a visual artist, author, and advocate whose work spans multiple disciplines and mediums, all of which are united by a common goal: to understand, shift perspectives and inspire constructive dialogue about our changing world. His Belfast and Brooklyn based practice, global in scale, seeks to reframe complex issues through accessible art and storytelling, encouraging audiences of all ages to see the world differently and consider their role in shaping its future.

From Northern Ireland, Jeffers is best known for his award-winning picture books, many of which are New York Times #1 Bestsellers, and have been translated into 49 languages and sold nearly 15 million copies worldwide. Beyond his literary success, he is an internationally recognised painter and sculptor, celebrated for his Dipped Painting series, and his explorations of globes and constellations in projects such as *For All We Know*, *The Moon*, *the Earth*, and *Us*, and *'Our Place in Space'*. Creative endeavours aside, Jeffers' foray into climate activism has projected him into spaces such as a speaker on the MainStage of TED, participation at COP26, and speaker at the Clinton Global Initiative's annual conference. He is also a recurring contributing writer for publications such as TIME magazine and The New York Times.

Jeffers' work, with its distinctive simplicity and beauty, invites people to engage with big ideas, offering fresh context, hope, and a renewed sense of purpose in these rapidly shifting times.

About Praise Shadows Art Gallery

Praise Shadows Art Gallery is a contemporary art program based in the Boston area with a focus on exceptional artists working in all artistic disciplines. Our worldview is informed by the notion that the artworld's untapped and unrecognized potential is worth cultivating, supporting, and championing. Since our founding in December 2020, the gallery has placed artworks by our artists in esteemed public collections, and our exhibitions have been covered widely in major international media outlets. Our work is grounded by partnering closely with artists to develop opportunities in traditional and emerging models of creativity and entrepreneurship—exhibitions, commissions, brand partnerships, new technologies, and original concepts that no one has ever tried before. www.praiseshadows.com

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