

Across a diptych, Thiang Uk conjures a green so otherworldly it appears expansive enough to hold both sky and sea at once. The left canvas falls in a dense, vertical rain of marks. Strokes drag straight down, darkest and most tangled towards the top, thinning into a paler green below as though light were gradually reaching the surface. Across the seam, the register shifts. The right panel eddies and coils, dark currents twisting through brighter water, the brushwork suggesting the pull of something moving beneath. Held together, the two halves feel like two moments within the same, stormy expanse – rain becoming undertow, sky becoming sea.

Uk's handling of paint is central to how his landscapes take shape. Oil is applied in loose brushstrokes, with individual flecks and dabs remaining legible within the larger composition. There is an echo here of the painterly traditions of Impressionism and Post-Impressionism, in which visible brushstrokes became a means of registering light, movement and atmosphere. Uk pushes this language towards a more intuitive, gestural mode, recalling the automatic and often bodily methods of the Abstract Expressionists. Yet the marks never feel entirely uncontrolled: their density and distribution are carefully calibrated against areas of openness, generating both movement and depth.

In another work, light glistens across a canvas seemingly ablaze. Vertical strokes fall like rain and rise like flame through fields of amber, rust and burnt gold. Scattered points of light pulse across the surface like sparks caught mid-fall, creating a depth that seems to recede the longer one looks. Near the base, three flat, muted squares sit like windows – quiet rectangles holding their ground against the surrounding field of light and colour. A similar impulse runs through Uk's practice more broadly. Elsewhere, he collages small works on paper directly onto his canvases, setting an intimate, small-scale mark against a much larger gesture. These fragments offer the eye a momentary place to rest before the surrounding turbulence draws it back in, providing a quiet counterpoint that grounds the composition and palette.

There's something of Susan Rothenberg in how Uk lets recognisable forms to emerge from, and then recede back into, a restless pictorial field. Like Rothenberg, he creates a tension between the familiar and the unresolved, with forms emerging briefly before becoming absorbed by colour and gesture. Uk extends this beyond the figure into the landscape itself. Sea, sky, land and atmosphere continually bleed into one another, so that the painting hovers between representation and abstraction without settling into either.

Uk was born in Hakha, in the region of Myanmar his family called home before political violence forced them to flee and settle in the United States when he was eleven years old. The region had turned to Christianity decades earlier, but pre-Christian animist stories continued to circulate orally even as belief shifted. Many reached Uk directly through his grandmother as bedtime stories alongside the Biblical narratives of his upbringing. Returning to these animist stories now, Uk is increasingly drawn to their fluidity: landscapes that shift and reform, the possibility of spirit residing within nature, and bodies that resist remaining fixed in a single form. For Uk,

shapeshifting is both subject and method- a way of giving form to what it means to belong across languages and cultures, in more than one place at once.

This fluidity is central to the body of work produced for his debut solo exhibition at The Sunday Painter, *Forever and a day*. Constructed through layered colour fields, radiating bursts and shifting structures, the paintings offer multiple points of entry rather than one fixed perspective. Forms emerge and dissolve across landscapes with no fixed horizon, conjuring mythical expanses that refuse to resolve into any one place.

The horizon, or rather its absence, is key to this sense of openness. Conventionally, a horizon establishes a point of orientation: a line separating earth from sky, near from far, and often the known from the unknown. It can mark an ending or an arrival, the point at which looking seems to stop. Uk's paintings offer no such point. The political turmoil of his birth country is part of what drew him to this absence in the first place. Rather than depicting a horizon, he withholds it, leaving the unease it carries – personal as well as collective – without a fixed place to anchor.

Yet this absence has its source in memory as much as in politics. Growing up on Florida's east coast, Uk would walk along Daytona Beach at night with friends, with the city illuminated on one side and the tide moving through the darkness on the other. On cloudy nights, staring out at the water, he recalls how the line between sky and sea would disappear. With fewer visual markers by which to identify or orient himself, his senses seemed to sharpen. What might otherwise register as disorientation became a source of pleasure, or simply a moment in which the boundaries between things could loosen. Water, in Uk's telling, is therefore never just a boundary. It separates his birthplace from the country he now calls home, but it also connects both places – the same ocean touching both shores, however distant they may be.

That same doubleness is built into Uk's use of the diptych. He is interested in the way two separate canvases can still read as a single image: the seam divides the composition, though the paint continues across it, drawing the two panels back together. In this sense, the central line recalls Barnett Newman's "zips", which similarly interrupt the pictorial field while giving structure to what surrounds them. But where Newman's zips assert a clear division, Uk's seam is less definite; the movement of the brushwork seems to spill across it, making the boundary between the two panels feel permeable.

For Uk, the diptych becomes a way of holding two possibilities in the same frame. What is remembered can exist alongside what is imagined, just as two places can exist within the same image. Its division is never absolute. The two panels remain separate yet continually speak across the space between them. In this sense, the diptych gives form to the duality at the heart of Uk's practice. Burmese-born and American now, Uk is shaped by more than one place without belonging exclusively to either. His paintings do not seek to resolve these tensions, but to hold them open, with two worlds made visible within the same expanse of paint.