

Rafał Topolewski

Smoulder

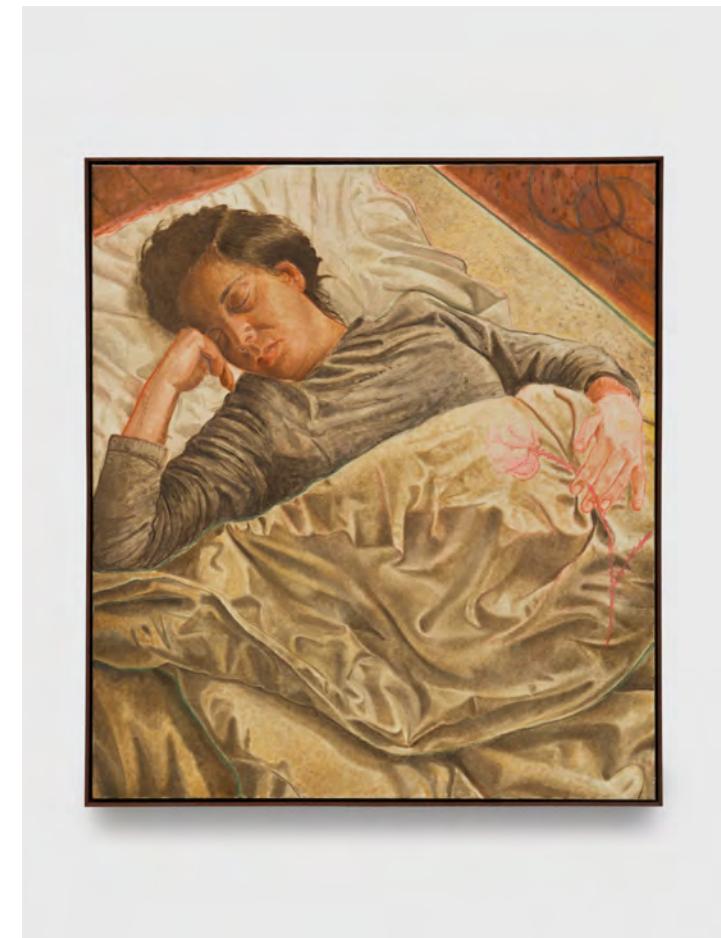
September 5 - November 1, 2025
GRIMM, 54 White Street, New York, NY (US)

GRIMM is pleased to present a solo exhibition by Rafał Topolewski, on view at the New York location from September 5 to November 1, 2025. This is the artist's second solo exhibition with the gallery, and his first solo exhibition in New York.

Marking his latest series of paintings and drawings, the exhibition navigates the liminal states between waking and sleep, interiority and observation, memory and materiality. Drawing on dreams, rituals, and deeply personal routines, Topolewski constructs scenes that feel at once tender and disquieting. Faces—often his own—emerge and dissolve within quietly unsettling compositions, while botanical forms, electrical cords, ears, droplets, and fragments of domestic life hint at an obsessive cataloguing of sensory experience. At the heart of this exhibition lies an interest in falling: falling into sleep, into thought, or into the self. As Topolewski notes, *“falling is a word that sounds gentle when attached to sleep, but when you separate it, it becomes something far more aggressive.”*

The works suggest a complex emotional terrain: the nurturing of thoughts and images both healing and invasive. Recurring motifs such as the peony—a naïvely proposed symbol of good fortune—and the thistle—at once a weed and medicine—anchor this duality, appearing throughout the works as metaphors for psychological balance and imbalance.

Topolewski's process begins with a personal archive of photographs, sometimes merged with digital research or art historical references. These references are often manipulated into digital collages before being transferred to linen. Yet the painting process itself resists control: working in oil with a dry brush technique, the artist allows chance and materiality to shape the final image. The resulting surfaces evoke photographic memory, lost clarity, and emotional residue.



Rafał Topolewski | *Untitled (Mariana)*, 2025

This exhibition features new large-scale canvases and smaller, intimately scaled works, as well as a selection of pencil-inflected drawings that reflect the delicate line between documentation and dissolution. In each, a soft, burnt sienna-hued palette and stippled textures conjure the dreamlike atmosphere unique to Topolewski's work. Clock faces merge with landscapes; glassy-eyed figures become indistinct; objects become metaphors for subconscious fears, compulsions, and coping mechanisms.

About the artist

Rafał Topolewski was born in Grudziadz (PL) in 1983. He studied architecture at the Wrocław University of Technology (PL), before receiving a BA in Fine Art from Manchester Metropolitan University (UK) in 2012. He went on to study Fine Art at the Royal Academy of Arts, London (UK), graduating with a Postgraduate Diploma in 2016. His work has been exhibited in the Netherlands, Portugal, the US, and across the UK.

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Topolewski's solo and group exhibitions include *A Room Hung With Thoughts: British Painting Now*, curated by Tom Morton, Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas, TX (US) in 2025; *Fragment II*, Commune Gallery, Vienna (AT) in 2025; *Slumber*, GRIMM, Amsterdam (NL) in 2024; *Interludes*, Alice Amati, London (UK) in 2023; *The Belly and the Guts*, Alice Amati, London (UK) in 2023; *In Three Acts*, Huxley-Parlour, London (UK) in 2023; *Becoming a Creature*, Tabula Rasa Gallery, London (UK) in 2023; *Castelet*, Simo Bacar, Lisbon (PT) in 2022; *Corpo e Mente*, curated by Lawrence Van Hagen, Palazzo Barbaro, Venice (IT) in 2022; *If not, Winter*, Simo Bacar, Lisbon (PT) in 2022; *Nudes and Dudes*, Lundgren Gallery, Mallorca (ES) in 2020; *Isle*, Smart Objects Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (US) in 2018; *Fully Awake*, Blip Blip Blip, Leeds (UK) in 2017; *Royal Academy Show*, Royal Academy Schools, London (UK) in 2016; and *Premiums*, Royal Academy of Arts, London (UK) in 2015. His work is included in the Simian Foundation, Shanghai (CN), among others.



Rafał Topolewski, GRIMM, Amsterdam (NL), 2024 | Photo by Jonathan de Waart

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