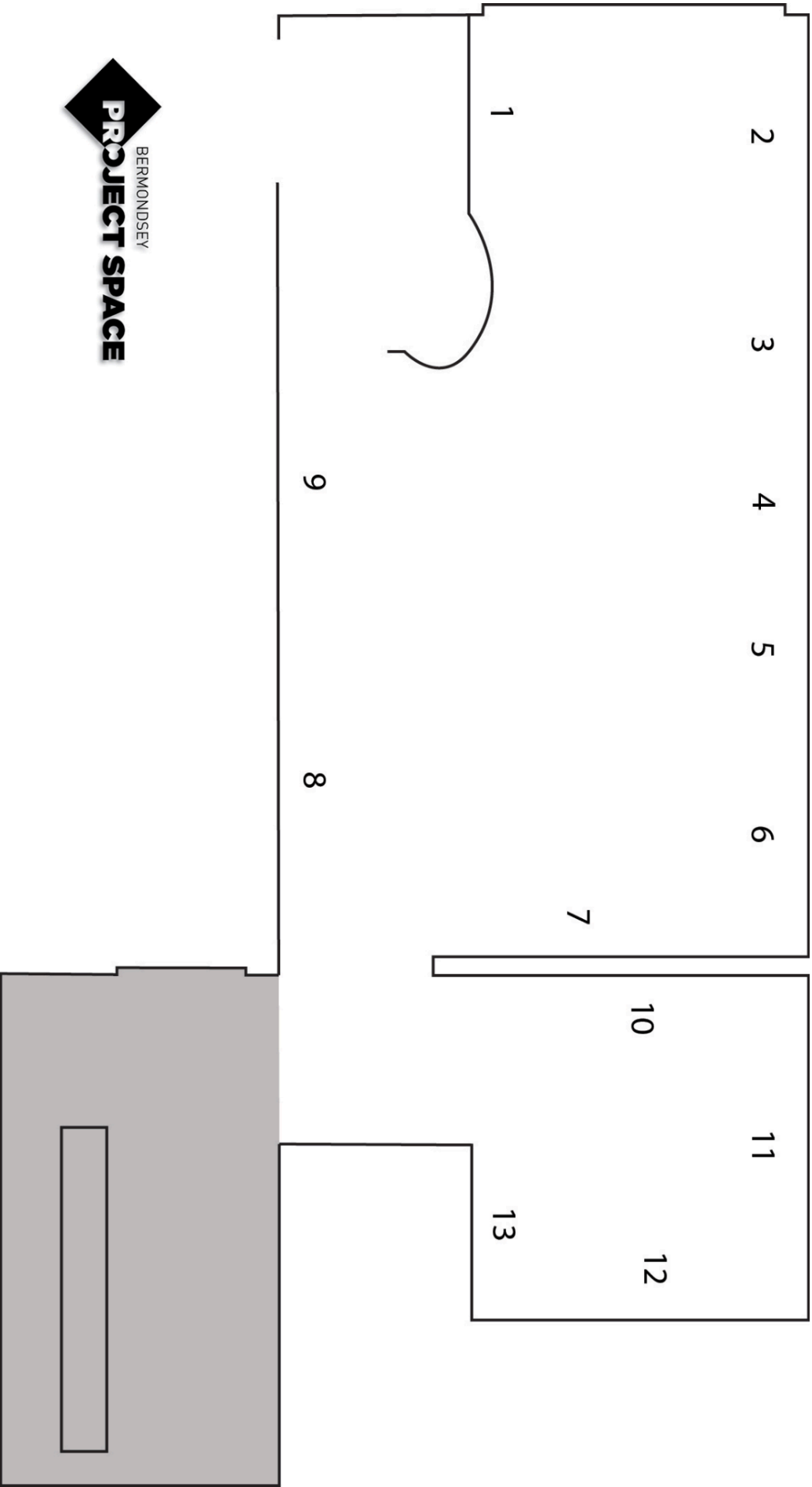

CLUB SILENCIO - Bermondsey Project Space - List of Works

1. Cayetano Sanz de Santamaria, "farra en el subconsciente de Bazurto", 2023, 42x59 cm, etching on paper £600 framed (£500 unframed)
2. Shane Berkery, 'Underground', 2024, 130x90cm, oil on canvas £4,730
3. Danny Leyland, 'A longing for rain', 2024, 90x120 cm, oil on canvas £4,500
4. Gus Monday, "Home Affairs", 85 x120 cm, Oil on Linen on pineboard NFS
5. Julian Lombardi, "Study for Omen V", 2024, 45x 60 cm, Charcoal, pastel and pencil on paper £2,600
6. Julian Lombardi, "Omen V", 2024, 122x152 cm, Oil, enamel and charcoal on canvas £6,400
7. Cayetano Sanz de Santamaria, "A Caribbean Ode to Time and Chaos", 100x228 cm, 2023, oil on canvas £4,000
8. Danny Leyland, 'Hunters of the black swan', 2024, 90x120 cm, oil on canvas £4,500
9. Cayetano Sanz de Santamaria, "Este mundo es pa' los avispados" (You Snooze you Lose), 2024, 200x150cm, oil on canvas NFS
10. Shane Berkery, 'Formal study: Kyoto', 2023, 60x50cm, oil on canvas NFS
11. Shane Berkery, 'Stairwell Vapour', 2024, 240x160cm, oil on canvas £7,200
12. Danny Leyland, 'Crusoe in England', 2024, oil on canvas, 60 x 50cm £2,850
13. Gus Monday, "Study for HM Passport Office", 2024, 39 x 29 cm, Oil on Linen on pineboard, Sapele wood frame. £1,700



**Club Silencio, a group exhibition at Bermondsey Project Space.
text by Danny Leyland, 2024.**

Painting are illusory and painters are illusionists.

- This is our starting point, our way into the paintings included in *Club Silencio*, an exhibition presented by artists from the Royal College of Art's Painting programme (2023-2024), involving students from Colombia, South Africa, the United States, Ireland & Japan, and the UK.

What matters for the purposes of my text is what takes place *within* the frame of the pictures - not beyond the frame. Afterall, paintings such as these are nothing more than a square or rectangle on the wall. But these little magic boxes just keep on giving. In fact, in order to receive all their gifts we absolutely require their rectangle-ness. As with the confines of verse forms – a sonnet, say, with its strict box of text in which the poem infinitely unfolds and speaks to itself – the deliberately cropped dimensions of a painting's edge are the very limitations which necessitate the limitless possibilities of the painting.

So let us step into these magical new worlds, to see the possibilities of the imagination as described by Prospero in *The Tempest*, 'The cloud capp'd towers, the gorgeous palaces / The solemn temples, the great globe itself...'

... We enter the Club Silencio in David Lynch's film, *Mulholland Drive*. On the stage, Rebekah Del Rio steps out amidst a quiet, expectant atmosphere. A lull in the tempo of the night's performances.

Del Rio begins to sing a transcendent acapella song, 'Llorando', her mature voice heavy with emotion. We cannot help but be greatly moved, as only the human voice can move us. Then, incredibly, the singer collapses halfway through her performance. But even after the singer falls to the ground the song continues to play! Suddenly we are aware of the sham – the music continues without the singer, the voice amplified across the theatre's sound system without the presence of the body we thought to be producing the noise.

We convinced ourselves to be swept along by something that wasn't even real. Or was it? If our response was real - and you could measure it in quickened pulse, beaded sweat, hair raised - how could the event of the experience itself be denied?

We fully comprehend the real artistry of the moment only after we have seen through the trick. Now we finally realise what exactly it is that we wish for more than anything: to be hoodwinked again. To be initiated once more into the illusion of Del Rio's performance.

The promise of the painter is to seem to offer to the audience an opportunity to experience new realities, such as that found at Club Silencio. As the artist R. B. Kitaj wrote, 'Mystics are said to discover a new world, very different from our familiar one and that is very much one of the things I hope a painting can do in its unlikely correspondences and citations based on sensation.' (1994) In this way the painter can be said to act in the way of a *paraclete*, (*paráklētos* in the Greek), an interpreter of heavenly truths, an intercessor charged with the revelation of things still veiled.

It's a clichéd observation perhaps, but the stereotypical character of the artist and the prophet in popular culture share many traits; both may be charlatans, tricksters and narcissists who use their charisma to hoodwink others into believing their conjured realities.

Earlier I quoted a fantastic vision described by Prospero towards the end of *The Tempest*. Prospero describes how this vision is constructed out of a 'baseless fabric', and constitutes only an 'insubstantial pageant'; for it is the end of the play, and everything must melt 'into air, into thin air'. The vision is destined to dissolve into nothingness, like the bubble of emotional expectation created by Del Rio's inspired song that is destined to burst when the trickery of her performance is unveiled.

The potential for the visionary promise to fail, whether it be a promise of paradise or apocalyptic destruction, however, does not completely erase the thrill of the believer. On the contrary, it is precisely within the charade of illusions, disguises, re-enactments, and the masque - the pretend version of things in other words - that we can best approach the truth of a thing. This is not because people secretly enjoy being deceived by others, it is because of people's curious ability to convert the act of faith into the state of faith itself.

It takes a mental shift, a certain effort of self will, to open and lay bare the auditorium of the imagination in order for it to be receptive to the marvellous illusion - whether it be in art or music or performance. I'm sure something like this performance of self-trickery is enacted by the sports fan who, despite knowing deep down how all the odds lie against their team, still attends the match with a cheerful countenance and a heart brimming with expectation. Even when inevitably the team comes to a crushing defeat, the fan retains deep down the secret flame of their belief.

Even when Rebekah del Rio lies unconscious on the stage floor, one part of us keeps the lamp trimmed in expectation, retaining the dangerous thrill that is our willingness to be deceived by the illusion.