

MARIAN GOODMAN GALLERY

# Numéro

*Matt Saunders, the American artist  
who likes to flood a canvas*

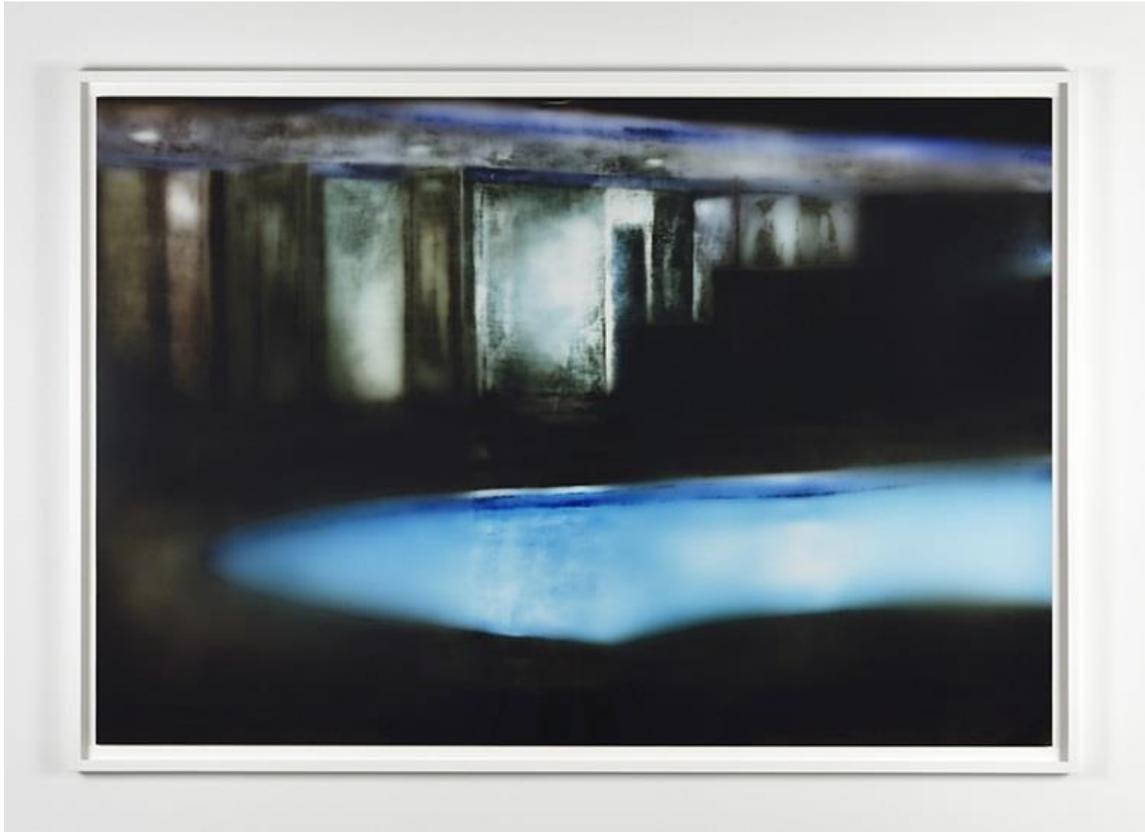
By Thibaut Wychowanok (May 11, 2016)



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The intriguing new paintings by Matt Saunders look as if they've got wet, as if they were blotting paper drenched with images. Meet the artist who's currently exhibiting at the Marian Goodman Gallery in Paris.



MATT SAUNDERS, Mulholland, 2016. C-print Kodak Endura Premiere. Image: 46 13/16 x 68 7/8 in. (119 x 175 cm).  
Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris

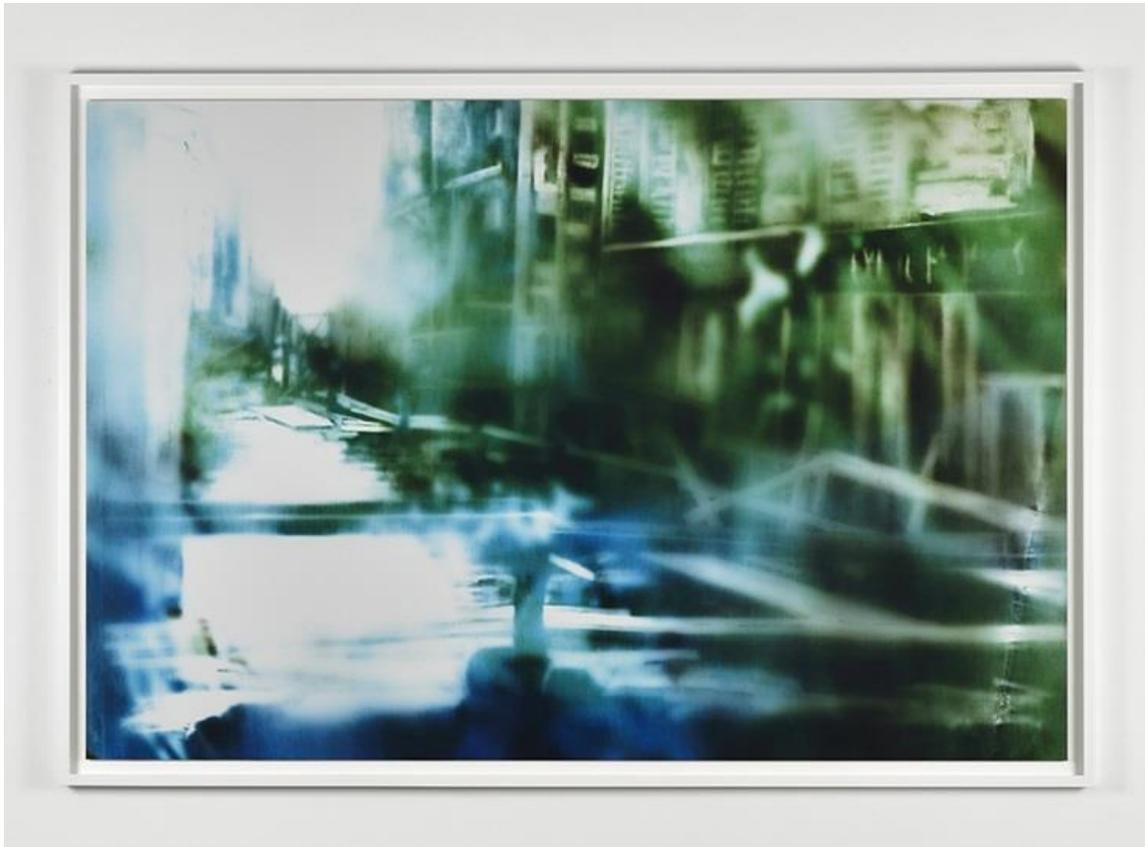
To create his images, Matt Saunders uses a technique that dips into alchemy. After choosing an image (from a film, or a postcard etc.) and having reproduced it in paint on a large scale canvas, he puts the result onto photo paper and exposes it to light. The light passes through the canvas where the paint doesn't stop it and makes the photographic paper react. The result is a photograph that looks like a negative of the painting.

After this dizzying mise en abyme, his works appear to be in perpetual movement with his more or less mastered effects of blurring and lines. Over the last few years they've become increasingly abstract, intriguing and thus absorbing ever more of the gaze. The artist's technique has also evolved. Today he uses a projector that allows him to enlarge different images at the same time onto the same canvas.

Flux, multiplication and the saturation of images are all at work in the paintings and video installation presented by the artist at the Marian Goodman Gallery in Paris until June 4th. For the occasion, Matt Saunders shared with us a few keys to understanding his work.

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MATT SAUNDERS, Paris 1910 (Verison 1) , 2016. C-print mat Kodak Endura Premiere.  
Image: 46 13/16 x 68 7/8 in. (119 x 175 cm). Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris

Numéro: What does the title of the exhibition “Inondé” [Flooded] refer to?

Matt Saunders: During the Sandy hurricane in 2012, the basements of my old gallery in New York got flooded. Some of my works were being stored there including a painting I recovered where you could see traces of the water, indicating the level it had reached. In this natural process, in the time it took and in its resulting effects, there was something that came very close to my own experiments. This idea of fluidity of the image or a moving picture on which I had worked was embodied there before my eyes. Except that I would never have managed to achieve that effect myself! That was pretty much the starting point to this exhibition.

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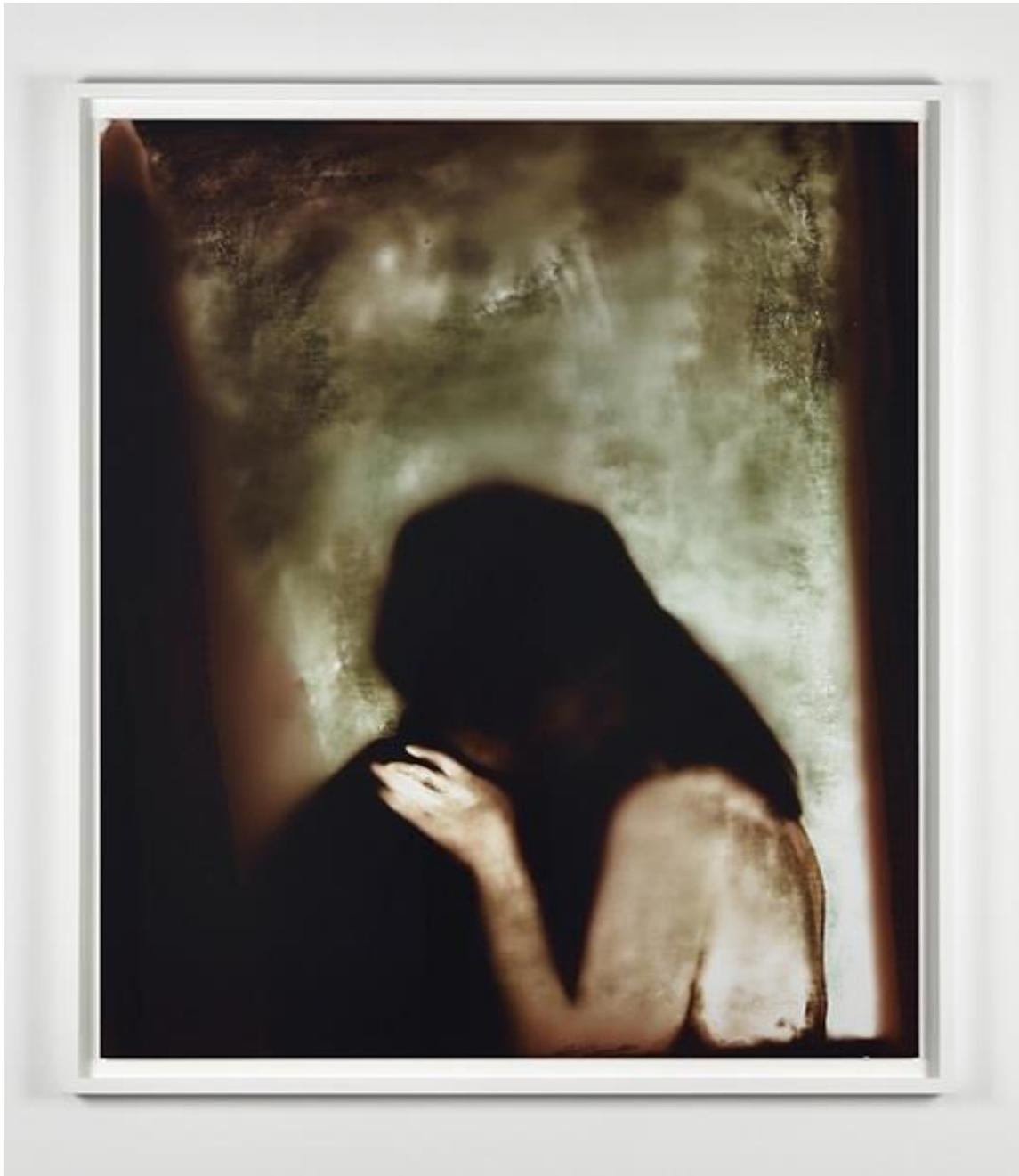
Exhibition view, Matt Saunders, *Inondé*. Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris

It also makes reference to Paris flooded by the Seine in 1910. Where do the images of that catastrophe that you used in your canvases come from?

Some of the amazing images I used as sources for the canvases on show with Marian Goodman come from early 20th century postcards. They show a Paris inundated by the flooding Seine. I started to collect them after discovering them at a flea market. They were pinned up on my wall... And gradually by dint of looking at them so much, they started to resonate with my reflection on the “fluid image”.

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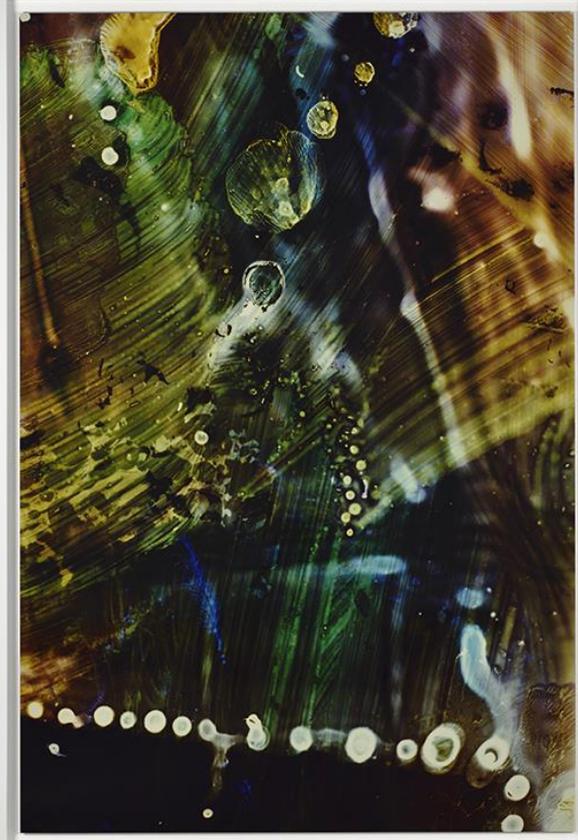
MATT SAUNDERS, *Embrace*, 2016. C-print Kodak Endura Premiere. Image: 49 9/16 x 43 1/4 in. (126 x 110 cm).  
Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris

The creative technique always plays an important role in your painting. How did you work these images?

What I found interesting about this new group of works was the thinking about how an image forms, through the interaction of various elements, but also the way that different materials come together. Without going into too much detail about the specific techniques I used, I'd say that the common point of all my paintings is the use of an enlarger which projects my drawings. I make them overlap to create different strata of photography. With

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MATT SAUNDERS, *Inondé 11*, 2016. C-print Kodak Endura Premiere. Image: 68 7/8 x 46 13/16 in. (175 x 119 cm).  
Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris

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Flooded Vault , 2016. Installation: 3 films HD animated, color, silent, 24 min. 48 sec. silverprinted.  
Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery, Paris

this tool, I can endlessly work the light and the colours. Among the works presented, some of them were done by only layering drawings and no painting, and others by using paint.

Why did you choose the basement at the Marian Goodman Gallery for this exhibition?

The basement and the ceiling of the gallery, where the video installation is being shown, were an obvious choice. These places echo the postcards featuring the Paris floods but also other images that I've caught. I'm thinking for example of the swimming pool image from David Lynch's Mullholland Drive. The water becomes a source of light in the heart of the painting.

Has water always been important in your work?

I was raised by the water's edge. So I would say that I'm the kind of person who falls into depression when I'm not near it (laughs). The ideas that come with water, fluidity, movement, absence of form are all a natural part of my work. In my paintings, just like with my videos, the feeling that things have yet to take shape is very significant. There's always something still moving. An energy at work...

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