

Notes on *April and After*

Justin Kamp

In all photography there is a trace of mummification.

“That-has-been,” Barthes called it: the essence of photography. The spectrum, photography’s subject and little simulacrum, superimposed between past and present, embalmed at once in a moment and its simultaneous disappearance. “That is dead and that is going to die,” he wrote. “Whether or not the subject is already dead, every photograph is this catastrophe.”

The frisson of a family photo album, the haunted eyes staring out of some old daguerreotype.

When Barthes saw a photo of his own mother as a child, he could not help but shudder in anticipation of that catastrophe that has already occurred: her death (in the present), not yet come to pass (in that perfect past).

We live with these ghosts. On the Internet they’re everywhere: a firehose of images, floating free from their contexts. A mausoleum of the not-yet-come-to-pass.

Danny’s work, then, resembles some kind of Orphean task. He wrangles these spirits from the online image-bardo, bringing them up to our world to be laid down in thin layers of softly-feathered oil. He has painted thumbnails yanked from a 480p hell; close-cropped screengrabs that allude to some past life or private code, floating just out of frame. They feel like omens, or like providence. Whose head is that? Whose shadow? There are no identifying features. We have no way in.

What we do have are the marks: blurs, artifacts, scars of an imagistic past life, a sharing and resharing across the Internet’s image economy. Hito Steyerl might call them evidence of the image’s “afterlife,” its journey through the no-man’s land of pirates and torrents and other resolution-strippers. In Danny’s hand, these gestures connote a visual nostalgia, the melancholic timbre of a memory or vanished medium. Not only are his subjects half-hidden, but the paintings themselves have often felt diaphanous, spectral, on the verge of disappearance.

In *April and After*, Danny’s marks have a newfound weight. Call it a fleshiness, a crush of capillaries seeping beneath the surface. The embalming has cracked; the death mask has slipped. Danny’s ghosts, once frozen, are returning

to nature: see the bruised washes of *after* (2025) and *pull* (2025), the bulbous polyp-like forms in *bloom* (2025).

It’s not just the mark-making that is infused with new life. The lone figures in Danny’s previous works have here become pairs: twins, friends, enemies, lovers. They gaze at each other, just as we gaze at them. Some seem to be looking out, at or just past us. There is protectiveness and distance to these paintings, but also a hush of connection, a hair-on-end intimacy in *two* (2025) or *between* (2025).

If photography mummifies, then the works in *April and After* do something like its opposite: they reanimate the once-dead image, imbue it with something that the originary camera can’t harness. Let’s not call it a soul; maybe something like presence. Not something “that-has-been,” but something that is: that watches and whispers from the wall.

About Danny Sobor

Danny Sobor is an American painter based in New York. He received an MFA in Visual Arts and Neuroscience from Brown University in 2015. Sobor has staged solo shows at Vacancy Gallery, Shanghai (2025) and Fortnight Gallery, New York (2024), and was featured in Kasmin’s annual benefit for Artistic Noise in 2024 and 2025. His work is held by the X Museum in Beijing and the Beth DeWoody collection, and will be featured in a forthcoming group exhibitions at Adler Beatty, New York, curated by Lily Mortimer, and Chilli Gallery, London.