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Hazy Figures Express the Anguish of Isolation in Hyperrealistic Paintings

By Margherita Cole on April 10, 2022



"This is Not What You Wanted," 2021

New York-based artist Alyssa Monks forces us to confront deep feelings of anguish in her newest series titled *It's All Under Control*. Inspired by the isolation brought upon by the COVID-19 pandemic, these realistic canvases coerce viewers into watching the emotional narratives of solitary figures, slightly abstracted by the wet glass of their shower stalls.

From hiding behind their hands to staring blankly at the wall, these intimate portraits depict a range of reactions to the crisis, each with its own unique voice. "At times, the recent global and national devastation, division, and so many disappointments felt like a surreal projection of my own mental states in the isolation of the last 18 months," Monks explains. "I began to explore the human reliance on control and predictability, and how our deepest suffering comes from our attachment to security, virtue, identity, and the logic of cause and effect."



"Watch the Only Way Out Disappear," 2021

Placing the figures in a slightly transparent bathroom stall serves several purposes, according to Monks. “The glass barrier in these paintings between subject and viewer is clouded with vapor that obscures and abstracts the subject,” she says. “This barrier underlines the personal and community-wide preoccupation with virus-laden respiratory droplets and the isolation it creates.” As a result, the viewer's perception of these figures is ambiguous; we cannot see the full expression of their faces or any clear detail. Instead, we are inferring their emotions through the body language and drama of the hazy setting.

Some of the paintings from this series are still available for purchase through the Forum Gallery. You can also find prints of the artist's paintings via her website, and keep up to date with Monks' latest work and upcoming exhibitions by following the artist on Instagram.



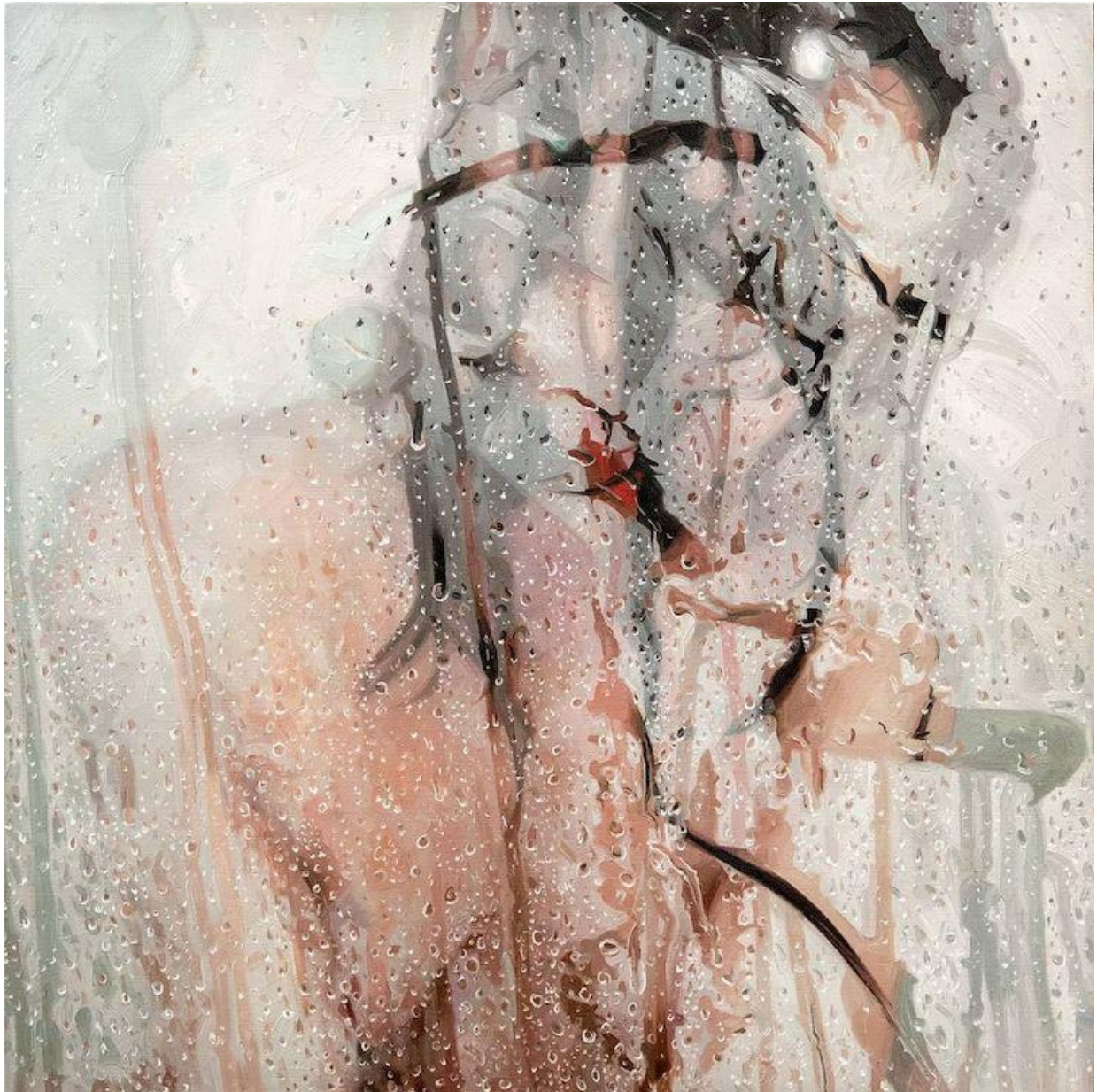
Detail of "This is Not What You Wanted," 2021

New York-based artist Alyssa Monks captures human reliance on control and predictability in her series *It's All Under Control*.



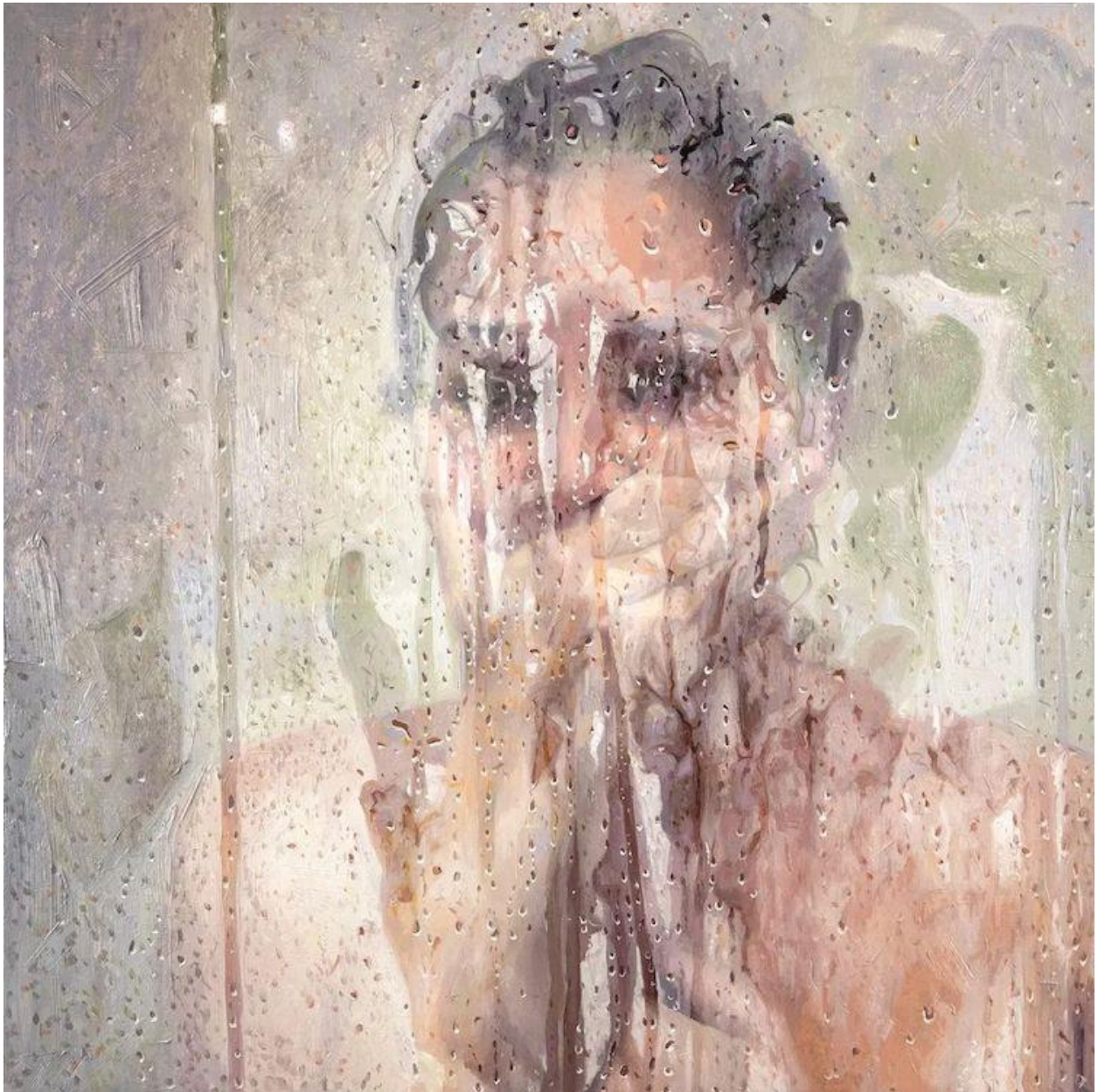
"It's All Under Control," 2021

Inspired by the isolation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, this series features paintings of solitary figures in moments of deep distress.

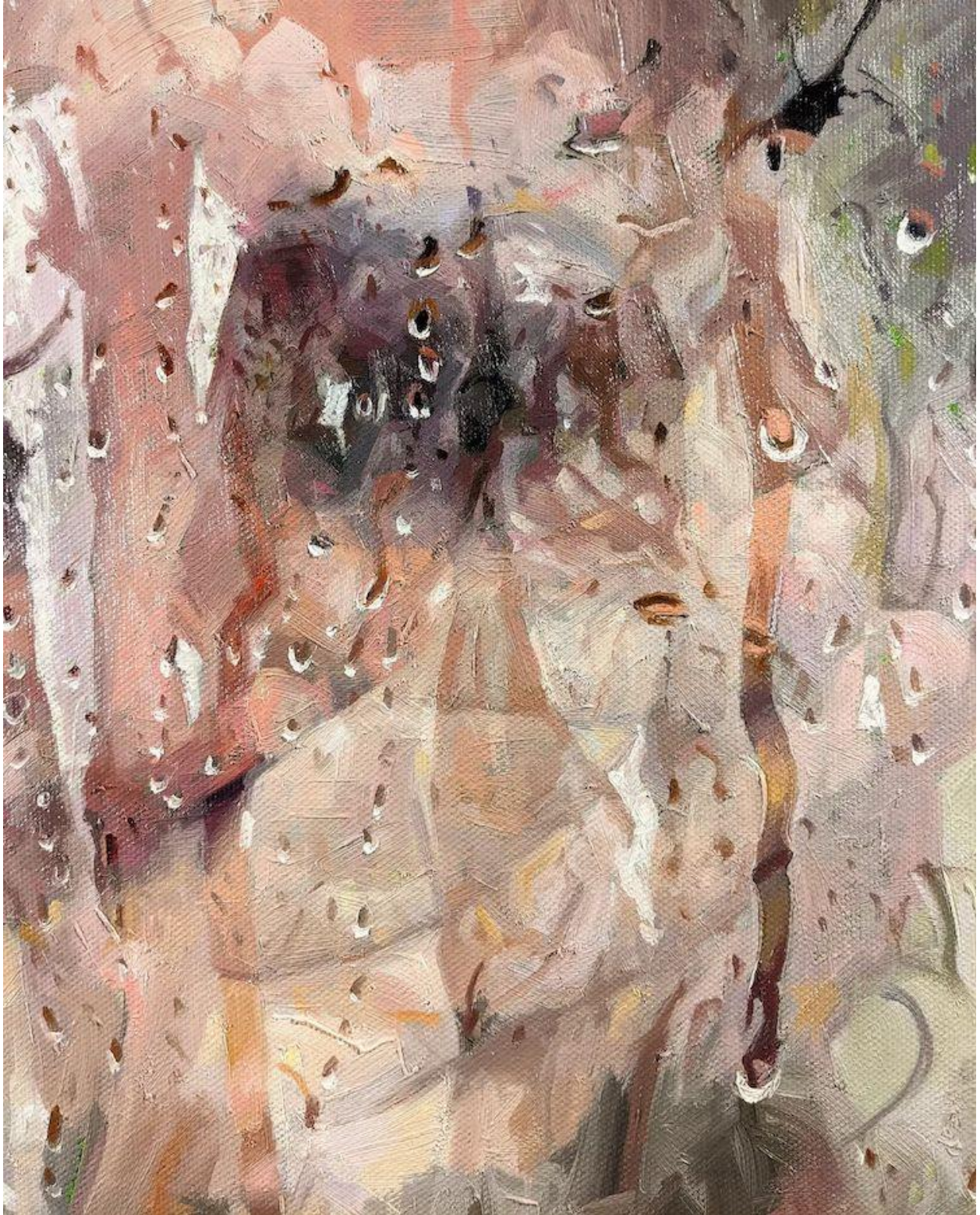


"Dissociate," 2021

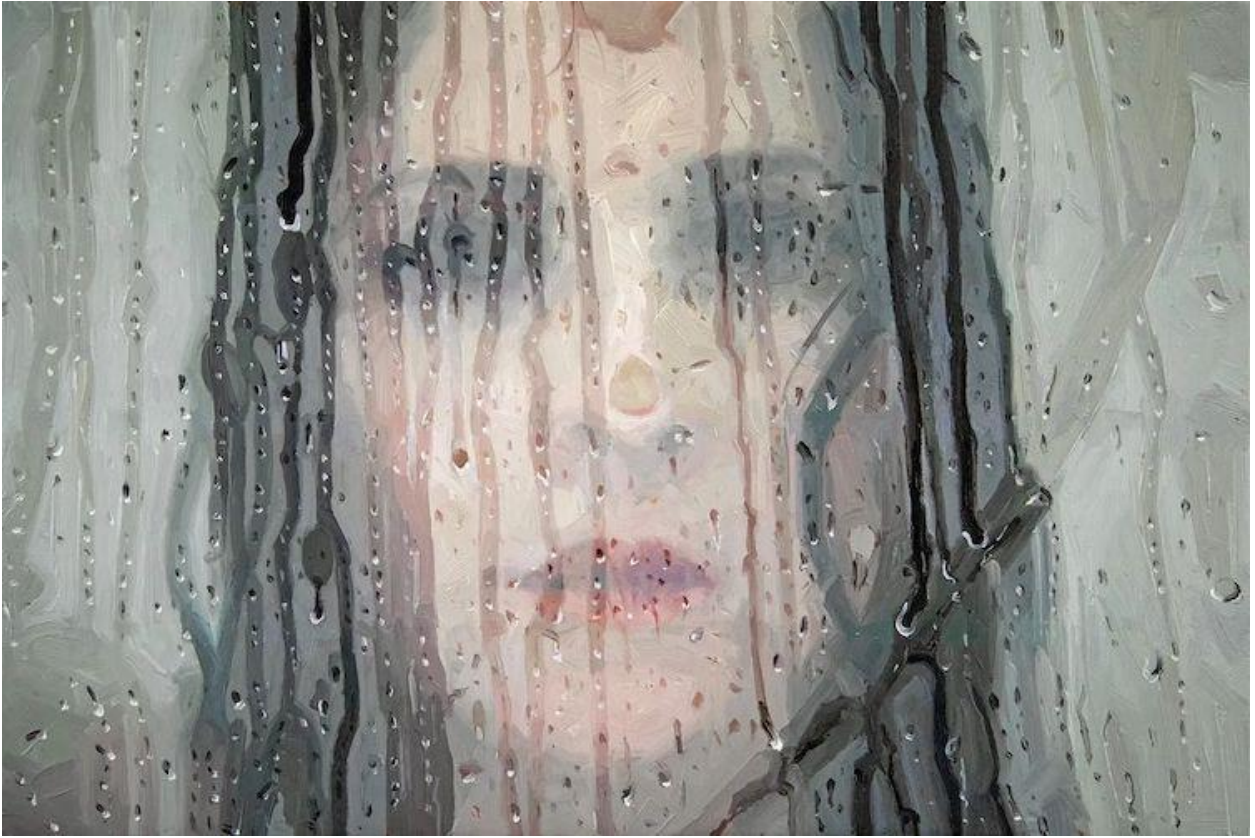
Each woman is alone in the shower stall, her anguish clearly felt even though her expression is distorted by the foggy, wet glass.



"No Going Back," 2021



Detail of "No Going Back," 2021



"We Never See It Coming," 2021