

## Grow

12 March to 19 April 2025

An exhibition of new works by Olly Fathers.

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Olly Fathers, *Untitled 1*, 2025, walnut burl and birch, 42cm x 32cm. Image courtesy of the artist.

**LONDON, 12 March, 2025** - JGM Gallery presents *Grow*, an exhibition of new works by London based artist, Olly Fathers.

Using less of the stained timber that featured in much of his earlier work, Fathers places greater emphasis in this exhibition on the organic aspects of his medium. Consistent with this are the protrusions of shapes beyond the borders, as though the timber, recharged with energy, is now outgrowing the conventional margins of an artwork. This novel approach is particularly distinct because of its juxtaposition with the rectangular works in *Grow*, which seem confined by comparison, like buds waiting to bloom.

There is, then, an invitation to think of these works as existing in a state of flux, and in the mind's eye the audience may imagine the timber to be moving toward a more expanded iteration of its present form. This strikes a line of continuity with Fathers' previous exhibition at JGM Gallery, *Tangram*, in which he and the artist, Dominic Beattie, presented works as constituents of a larger, unresolved puzzle. In *Grow*, Fathers shifts away from this conception of his work as a human construct, instead presenting it as an autonomous evolution of nature.

A notable influence on this series is a concept espoused by Michelangelo in his poem, *Non ha l'ottimo artista alcun concetto* (1547), where he argues that a sculptor does not *create* but instead *reveals* the work of God encased within a block of marble by removing the superfluous material around it. Adopting a secular reinterpretation of this idea, Fathers invites the audience to see the forms in his work not as creations of his own making, but as inherent structures of the natural world, waiting to be uncovered. That is, the creative process is seen by the artist as a collaboration with nature, rather than an imposition upon it.

Before this body of work, Fathers would often only use two or three different veneers for any single piece of artwork. *Grow*, however, features works constructed with greater material variety, and includes veneers cut from birch, spalted beech, figured sycamore, tamo, bubinga, kevasingo, dyed tulip, ash, pear and birds eye maple, amongst others. Consequently, the compositional arrangements are more complex and nuanced than those previously produced by the artist. While he rejects any kind of narrative or representational reading of his work, Fathers admits that the audience might inevitably associate certain shapes with globes, clocks or architectural structures. He emphasises, however, that the process itself guides him, and that these arrangements are prompted by technique, spontaneity, and the materials presented to him.

Jennifer Guerrini Maraldi, Director of JGM Gallery, says that “These works represent an exciting development in Olly's artistic practice, and we are thrilled to be showing them to the public for the first time here at JGM Gallery.”

## About the artist

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Based in Brixton, London, Olly Fathers constructs works with wooden veneers, using this medium to explore the effects of scale, shape and colour on his audience. Aside from his interest in these formal qualities, he will often delve conceptually deeper, addressing and recontextualising historically significant philosophical questions. Despite the ostensibly high brow nature of these interrogations, he always retains a sense of play and simplicity, encouraging the viewer, through the puzzle like aesthetic of his work, to contemplate variations of the composition before them.

Modernist architecture, the flow of public traffic in built-up cities, and early computer technology are notable influences on

Fathers' geometric abstractions. In this there is an intriguing contrast between form and content, as these arrangements are presented to the audience in the distinctly preindustrial and pretechnological guise of timber. The result is an aesthetic that is at once old and new, familiar and novel. Above all, Fathers practice is grounded in his obsession with – and indeed mastery of – woodwork, a practice with craft connotations but which, in his hands, becomes the vehicle for profound examinations of the human experience.

Fathers work has been exhibited in significant artistic institutions, including Saatchi Gallery, London, and he has partaken in various commissions of note, most recently for the collections of Soho House in London, Tel Aviv, Amsterdam, and Mumbai.

## About JGM Gallery

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JGM Gallery was founded in 2017 by Jennifer Guerrini Maraldi, one of the United Kingdom's leading specialists in Indigenous contemporary art from Australia. For more than 20 years, she has collected, dealt, and promoted the work of First Nations artists and, in addition to this, her gallery represents a diverse roster of both established and emerging British contemporary artists.

Through its exhibition programme, JGM Gallery seeks to amplify the enduring significance of Indigenous art and culture, with a focus on the use of sacred processes, traditional techniques, and contemporary innovation. In the words of Guerrini Maraldi, "The styles of this movement's leading figures are as varied, complex and sophisticated as any in the Western canon." Since its inception, JGM Gallery has placed the work of its Indigenous and British contemporary artists in significant private and institutional collections.

JGM Gallery's mission is to also adequately contextualise the practices of the artists it represents. In alignment with this approach, the gallery produces a variety of publications, with a focus on scholarship, artist collaboration and editorial design. A commitment to publishing expands the gallery programme beyond its exhibitions – an ethos which fosters reflection and further conversation from our wider audience and community.

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For further information and press enquiries, please contact the gallery at [info@jgmgallery.com](mailto:info@jgmgallery.com) or + 44 (0) 207 228 6027.

### Opening Reception:

Wednesday, 12 March, 6:30pm - 8:30pm  
24 Howie Street,  
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