

[Tansey at Gagosian](#)

Read a series of quotes by Mark Tansey on [The Artchive](#) about everything from realism and representation to crossroads, illustration, and riff and resonance.

Read reviews of Tansey's 1997 solo exhibition at Curt Marcus Gallery in New York, including one in the [New York Times](#) by Roberta Smith and another in [Artforum](#) by David Frankel.

[Mark Tansey](#) was installed at Gagosian Gallery in 2004, his first major exhibition in New York since 1997. This exhibition was the first where the artist exhibited work painted in "ultramarine blue." Read a [review](#) in ARTnews by Daniel Grant, "The Art of Mark Tansey is Slow to Make, Quick to Sell."

In 2005, *Mark Tansey* was the artist's first solo exhibition in Germany, held at the [Museum Kurhaus Kleve](#). The exhibition then traveled to [Württembergischer Kunstverein](#) in Stuttgart.



Tansey, unknown date  
Photograph: DPA Picture Alliance Archive

[Tansey at the Broad](#)

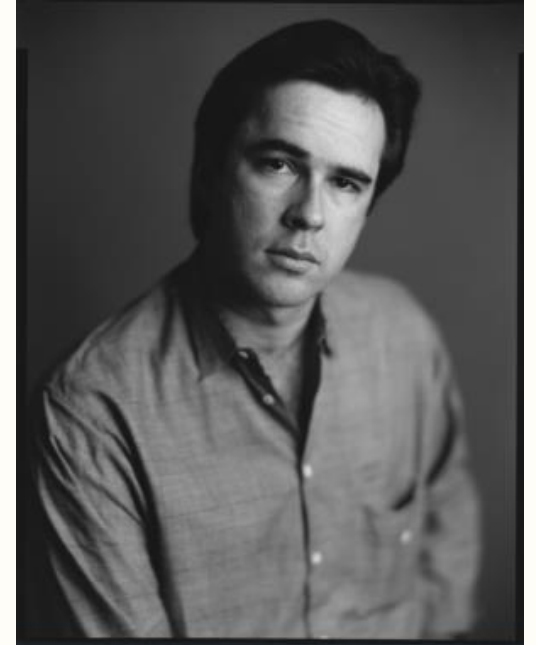
The 2009-2010 exhibition *Mark Tansey* at [Gagosian Gallery London](#) was Tansey's first solo exhibition in London.

[Mark Tansey](#) was installed at Gagosian Beverly Hills in 2011. For this exhibition of recent paintings, the artist utilized "ultramarine blue" to evoke architectural blueprints.

In 1994, Tansey organized an exhibition by young Chinese painters who had recently arrived in New York, which was followed by a co-curated exhibition with Peter Drake twenty years later. The second installation of the exhibition featured five of the original Chinese artists joined by five Russian artists creating "unofficial" and subversive work. [Read a conversation](#) between Tansey, Drake, and other members of the 2014 exhibition in Gagosian Quarterly.

[Mark Tansey: Reverb](#) was on display at Gagosian Gallery in New York in 2017. Read an article in [Gagosian Quarterly](#) by Alexander Wolf that served as a guide through the complex layers of the exhibition.

The 2021 exhibition [Mark Tansey: Recent Paintings and Graphite Drawings](#) at Gagosian Gallery New York covered six years of the artist's recent works.



Tansey, unknown date  
Photograph: Timothy Greenfield-Sanders



Mark Tansey (American, b. 1949)

**Fixing No. 1.**, 2000

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2025:60.1

Born and raised in California, Mark Tansey developed a deep interest in art from an early age. He studied at the Art Center College of Design in Los Angeles and Hunter College in New York, where he began exploring the intersections of popular visual culture, surrealist imagery, and a meticulous painting process. **Fixing No. 1** includes many of Tansey's iconic elements: layered imagery, a puzzling subject, and a monochromatic composition. Like his other hyper-realistic works, this was produced by subtracting layers of red paint to reveal gradations of the white canvas below.

*On view September 3 – December 7, 2025*

Mark Tansey (American, b. 1949)

**Archive**, 1991

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2024:45.1

Mark Tansey grew up with a fascination of literature, philosophy, mathematics, and the history of visual culture. His monochromatic paintings are often inspired by magazine clippings and photographs; they are produced using a meticulous process of adding and subtracting layers of paint to reveal the white gesso and canvas below. **Archive** is a scene of sunbathers on a large rock by the sea. Upon closer inspection, the landscape itself is composed of layers of text, pointing to the role of mass communication and language in building our society.

*On view July 3 – October 6, 2024*





Mark Tansey (American, b. 1949)

**Veil**, 1987

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2023:35.2

“I think of the painted picture as an embodiment of the very problem that we face with the notion of ‘reality.’ The problem or question is, which reality? In a painted picture, is it the depicted reality, or the reality of the picture plane, or the multidimensional reality the artist and viewer exist in? That all three are involved points to the fact that all pictures are inherently problematic.” – Mark Tansey, 1992

Mark Tansey has a deep-seated interest in literature, philosophy, mathematics, and the history of visual culture. His monochromatic paintings are often rendered in blue or red, with imagery sourced from photographs, magazine clippings, or other archival material that complements a historical or philosophical subject. **Shades** and **Veil** are interpretations of an allegorical story referenced in Plato’s *Republic*. The philosopher imagines a cave where prisoners have spent their entire lives chained to the walls. The prisoners only experience the world through shadowy reflections in the cave, taking this perspective as “reality.” To Plato, it is the enlightened experience of being outside the cave (armed with knowledge of science, mathematics, and logic) that brings understanding and truth to the world. The figures in these paintings are confronted with the shimmering light of knowledge. Do they pass through the veil or remain in the shade?

*On view July 6 – October 15, 2023*

Mark Tansey (American, b. 1949)

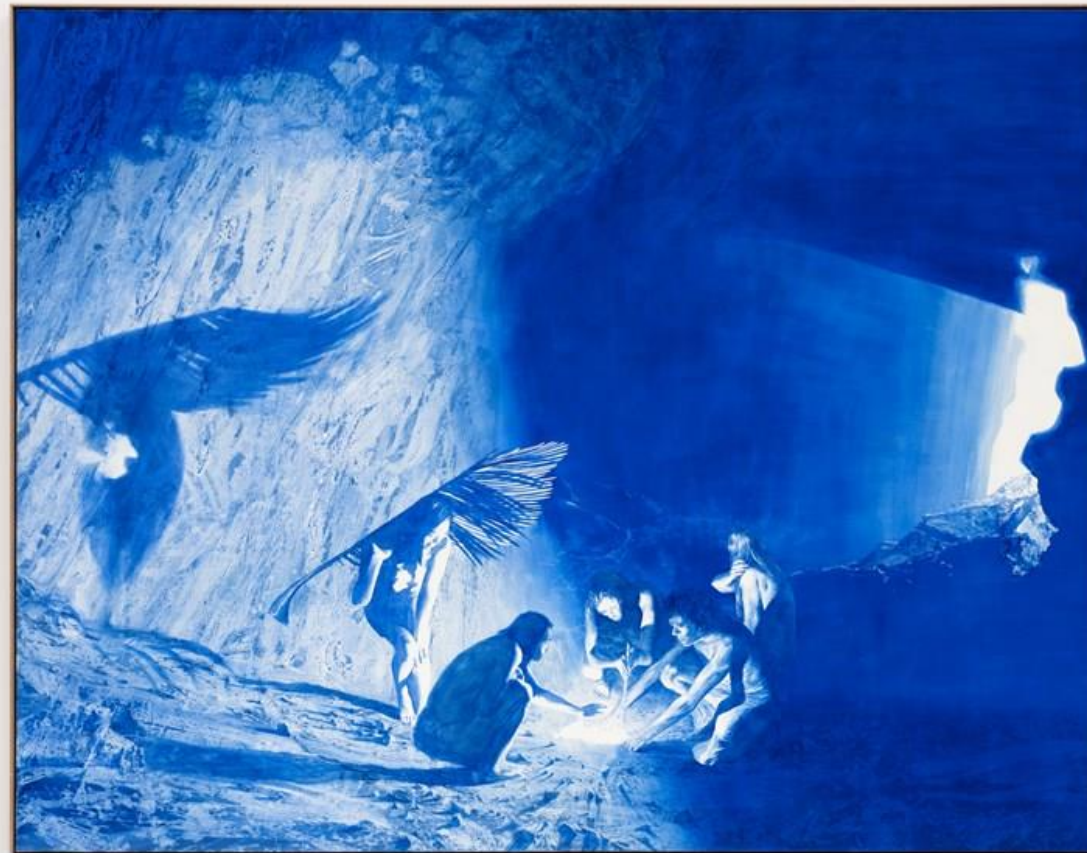
**Shades**, 2001

Oil on canvas

Private Collection; L2023:35.1

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*On view July 6 – October 15, 2023*



Mark Tansey (American, b. 1949)

**Study on "Installing the Lens", 2000**

Mixed media on canvas

Private Collection; L2022:44.1

Raised in San Jose, California, by a father who was an art historian and a mother who was an art slide librarian, Mark Tansey developed a deep-seated interest in literature, philosophy, mathematics, and the history of visual culture. Tansey's carefully planned compositions are often inspired by photographs and magazine clippings and executed in meticulous detail. The artist works in monochromatic pigments with a subtractive painting process; he carefully covers the composition in color before removing layers of paint to reveal the image. **Study on "Installing the Lens"** depicts a long, cavernous tunnel with obscured figures working to install a lens device. Like other works in Tansey's oeuvre, the painting is rich with symbolic meaning and visual puns, reflecting on both the nature of perception and the familiar adage that there is "light at the end of the tunnel."

*On view August 31 – December 4, 2022*