

CATHARSIS IN THE FLAME

Lydia Makin

13 January - 11 February 2023

"I experience painting as the literal physical extension of my body whereby I undergo continual birth and rebirth of myself into the world." Lydia Makin

STUDIO WEST is proud to present Lydia Makin's debut solo show 'Catharsis in the Flame'. The exhibition features an evocative selection of new pieces, created throughout 2022 in Makin's Nottingham studio. Since graduating from the Slade School of Fine Art in 2020, she has gained rapid recognition for her immense, expressive and spell-binding abstract paintings. Her powerful new series offers a mischievous meditation on the notion of catharsis, considering it both as an idea which may be depicted visually and as a potential effect produced for the viewer.

First used by Aristotle in the Poetics, 'catharsis' is a frequently deployed term in literary criticism which signifies the process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions. In Makin's work, this idea of deep-seated feelings, thoughts and memories being pulled to the surface is visually manifested on the canvas. Each work features a rich eruption of intense colour that seems to burst forth from a central tear. Meanwhile, on viewing the paintings, the spectator is met with a deeply effecting colourscape, stunningly rendered in fluid and suggestive brush strokes, which itself has the power to induce an impactful emotional response.

"I think my paintings are evocative of the human form, as there is a sense of something beneath the surface; is it a ghost, a memory, a thought form, all of these or something else entirely?" Lydia Makin

Makin's paintings are inherently mysterious - their capacity to bring forth a soul-stirring and poignant reaction for the viewer is dependent on this irreducible and immeasurable quality. Each painting is imbued with the sense that something remains hidden, always lurking beneath the surface. Makin has moved away from direct figuration in the years since graduating, yet an ephemeral energy clings on. Her works seem to look back upon the viewer and much waits hidden within them that cannot be easily uncovered.

"There are certain moments where I take total command of the canvas and the image effortlessly comes into fruition. It can feel like a release of some kind. I find these paintings rare, as they arise after a period of struggle and contemplation." Lydia Makin

Despite this inherent obscurity, there are certain ideas, symbols and motifs that seem to echo throughout the body of work. Namely a dichotomous relationship between the tranquil and the disturbed, an ineffable and undefined spirituality, a sense of heat and the urgency of an unexpected burst of flame, and a timelessness that allows them to inspire all manner of visions. Ultimately, they are defined by the freedom of interpretation that they offer - the abstract nature and sense of encased meaning allows each viewer to discover their own route into the work and find a personal reflection of themselves concealed within.

"Every viewer will add something of himself in what he sees. As I see it, my role as an artist is not to direct or 'guide' the viewer toward a particular viewpoint, ideology, or philosophical outlook. I strive instead for my paintings to be a gateway or portal, one that beckons the viewer into their own senses, dreamworld, and inner symbolic life; to a place within where they may discover their own meanings, desires, longings, joys and sorrows."

Lydia Makin

As we enter 2023 and contemplate new beginnings, this debut solo exhibition 'Catharsis in the Flame' by Lydia Makin invites us to confront the deeper parts of ourselves we often keep hidden. Her works open space for genuine emotional responses and invite the existential reprieve that follows the release of repressed emotions. In this way, the exhibition is true to its title - offering a cathartic experience amongst the burning intensity of this noteworthy painter's creativity, vision and innovation.

"I would like to think my paintings offer a sense of spiritual renewal or purification from tension." Lydia Makin

STUDIO WEST

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ABOUT STUDIO WEST

STUDIO WEST is a cultural hotspot in Notting Hill founded by curator Caroline Boseley. The gallery focuses on showing work by emergent and newly established London based artists, offering support, mentorship and hosting opportunities that showcase the most exciting upcoming talents. The gallery takes a new approach to commercial, contemporary art – it puts artists' needs at the forefront and nurtures an awareness of the local community within which it operates.

STUDIO WEST opened in November 2021 with a show by Victoria Cantons and Xu Yang and has since hosted multiple group exhibitions, including 'The Reality in Whytch You Create', 'GROUNDWORK' and 'Fancy a Bite?' and a solo show of new pieces by Karolina Albricht titled 16 Branches High. It is becoming known for exceptional one-off events, including ballet performances, afternoon teas, panel talks, and celebratory parties.
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