

SKIN DEEP

11 March - 5 April 2023

Ada Bond
Alice Miller
C Lucy R Whitehead
Iga Bielawska
Ki Yoong
Moussa David Saleh
Naila Hazell
Nina Baxter
Preslav Kostov
Serpil Mavi Üstün
Sophie Milner

STUDIO WEST is proud to present SKIN DEEP, a group exhibition of eleven emerging UK-based figurative painters. The works on show examine the body as a vessel through which we interface with the external world and as a blank slate onto which our experiences are irreversibly inscribed. Through various renderings of skin texture and surface, we are reminded of our corporeal fragility - we witness the porousness of the protective yet penetrable barrier that contains us.

Drawing its focus from Bessel van der Kolk's seminal text 'The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma', the exhibition explores the proposition that trauma has an enduring and often-overlooked impact on our physical health, and that healing the body is thus a vital pathway to mending the mind.

Through a primary focus on the physical form, the artists on show offer at times unintended insights into their personal experiences and psychological states: in their work, the body stands in for the mind. The act of creating each piece, meanwhile, can be thought of as a healing journey - a cathartic act of agency whereby the artist repositions themselves in relation to their experiences.

The exhibition uniquely situates van der Kolk's thesis in conversation with Melissa Febos' candid and sensitive memoir, 'Body Work: The Radical Power of Personal Narrative'. Febos' text posits questions eternally relevant to the confessional artist regarding subjectivity, privacy and the power of divulgence: What is the artist's desire, capacity or responsibility to disclose the emotional,

distressing or deeply personal in their work? What becomes of the viewer who bears witness to the secrets concealed within the canvas? And to whom, in the end, does an artist's most intimate experiences belong?

For each artist, the body - whether rendered in its entirety or alluded to through suggestion - becomes a vehicle to express, and at times resolve, a variety of psychological wounds. The exhibition is almost confrontational in its concentration on the corporeal; harnesses the power of repetition for emphasis, the space feels alive with the abundance of flesh. The viewer is thrust into a unique position, simultaneously unsettled by the profusion of depictions of skin, entwined limbs and open faces and situated as the unsuspecting bystander towards whom the artists' immense vulnerability is directed.

Through the works of eleven up-and-coming painters, the exhibition examines the power of the body in contemporary art, presenting it as a multifarious and complex visual signifier that bears the scars of experience, inner struggle and trauma. It also investigates the healing capacity of 'body work', whether therapeutic or artistic, while addressing a long-standing debate in psychoanalysis - if to externalise trauma is to heal it.

ABOUT STUDIO WEST

STUDIO WEST is an art gallery in Notting Hill founded in 2021 by curator Caroline Boseley.

STUDIO WEST platforms the talent of the future. Its annual exhibition and events programme features the work of the UK's most exciting emerging and newly established artists. Working exclusively with UK-based creatives who are still studying or who have recently graduated, it specifically seeks to highlight underrepresented artists and address artworld inequalities as they exist in relation to gender, race, and socio-economic background.

The gallery endeavours to fully support the artists it works with through mentorship, hosting opportunities, network building and knowledge sharing, nurturing their growth and helping them to build sustained professional careers without requiring exclusive representation. For collectors, it offers the opportunity to learn more about London's vibrant emerging art scene and purchase artwork made by incredibly promising talents.

Since inception, STUDIO WEST's values have remained the same. It aims to engage fully and authentically with the local community, create a comfortable and welcoming space for all visitors, encourage investment in contemporary art by emerging and newly established artists and, most importantly, always prioritise the needs of the artists' we are working with.

STUDIO WEST

216 KENSINGTON PARK RD, LONDON, W11 1NR

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 two solo shows with Karolina Albricht and Lydia Makin respectively. The gallery runs an annual Open Call Exhibition and Art Prize titled 'NOW Introducing' that invites applications from any artist currently studying on or recently graduated from a London based MA or alternative study programme. STUDIO WEST is becoming known for thoughtful concept-driven exhibitions, authentic community engagement, and offering comprehensive support to London's emerging artists.
@studio_west_gallery | studiowest.art

STUDIO WEST

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