

TOMORROW WILL BE THE MOST BEAUTIFUL DAY OF YOUR LIFE

Victoria Cantons & Xu Yang

11 NOVEMBER - 15 DECEMBER 2021

Studio West is proud to present its inaugural exhibition, 'Tomorrow Will Be The Most Beautiful Day Of Your Life,' displaying new works by artist couple Victoria Cantons and Xu Yang. This will be their first show as a duo, presented in celebration of their creative and personal collaboration. Cantons and Xu share a studio and work in conversation, questioning how art operates as a redeeming medium and addressing themes of uncertainty, identity, and the female gaze. The exhibition is unique in that it shows work of two artists who are intensely bonded, known for creating depictions of one another and working in unison.

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Victoria Cantons

The show title speaks to hope, love, and positivity. Both artists see the exhibition as carrying a message of promise, offering the idea that if you seek to be your best self you will be met with a brighter tomorrow. It also relates to their ongoing relationship and the challenges they have overcome to sustain it. Both artists explore ideas of identity through their work, but what emerges in this exhibition is that they are their most true and comfortable selves when working and creating together.

The exhibition includes Victoria Cantons' stunning floral paintings and works spanning painting and performance from Xu Yang's diverse practice. For Cantons, the floral paintings emerged as a key facet of her work after the death of her mother. As a child, Victoria would photograph her mother's rose bushes in their garden, and today she still paints her floral works from living, wild plants rather than arranged bunches. These large-scale works are tactile, delicate, and beautiful, with a gentle use of color that conjures an immersive sense of romance.

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Cantons' practice is always self-referential. She uses drawings and written notes combined with found and made photographs to explore her past experiences and

present emotions. Cantons fills sketchbooks that rarely leave her side with affirmations, poetry, and sketches of individuals and objects that she holds dear. As such, it is unsurprising that Xu regularly appears as a central figure in Cantons' work. Close up, delicate images of Xu's face, attended to with immense care and admiration, highlight the intensity of their affection. Cantons also regularly photographs and documents Xu's complex and emotive performance work.

"I love how our work is entwined. I love the way she paints me; they look different than when she paints other subjects. She treats the paintings of me more carefully, I can see in the way she is painting, handling the brushes, I think she's more focused."

Xu Yang

Xu Yang will exhibit paintings and performance works that bring fantasy into reality. For these pieces, Xu wears intricate costumes, pink wigs, and sentimental jewels while moving silently through space and presenting a private alter-ego for scrutiny. Her performances are both autobiographical and confessional; they explore her complex identity, the construction of gender, and the female gaze while creating a realm for reclaiming herself through femininity.

As a child growing up in China, Yang was discouraged from wearing flamboyant clothing and appearing overtly feminine. On moving to London, she was exposed to the local drag scene and the gregarious explorations of gender and identity that it encompassed. This influenced her performative work, which exists as a form of rebellion and rejects the restrictions placed on her self-expression throughout her upbringing.

Their practices are heavily influenced by each other; they offer one another technical advice, references, and critique. Together they visit exhibitions, exchange notes, and educate one another on canonical works throughout the history of art. Xu recalls being particularly taken with shared visits to National Trust properties from the early days of their relationship. Xu's paintings are imbued with ornamentation, details which recall French Rococo and the bedroom decoration of stately homes from the 17th and 18th centuries.

She often uses mirrors in her work, recalling Velasquez's *Las Meninas* and vanity paintings of reclining Venuses by artists such as Titian. Her female figures appear nude in rooms draped with lavish red velvets beside symbolic objects such as peacock feathers. For Cantons, Titian and Goya are also touchstones, along with contemporary woman painters such as Jenny Saville. Cantons sources inspiration for her work from an enormous range of material, noting that Hisham Matar's memoir 'A Month in Sienna' and Julian Schnabel's film 'Before Night Falls' have been at the forefront of her mind during the creation of these works.

The exhibition promises to be a decidedly personal view into the creativity and connection shared by this artist couple. The artworks, created in unison, will present viewers with an intimate account of an exceptional relationship between two artists at the forefront of contemporary painting.

ABOUT STUDIO WEST

STUDIO WEST is an art gallery in Notting Hill founded in 2021 by curator Caroline Boseley. Its annual exhibition and events programme features the work of the UK's most exciting emerging and newly established artists. It 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 created by emerging and newly established artists and, most importantly, always prioritise the needs of the artists' it works with.

The gallery opened in November 2021 with a duo show by Victoria Cantons and Xu Yang and has since hosted multiple group exhibitions, including 'The Reality in Whytch You Create', 'Fancy a Bite?', 'GROUNDWORK', 'SKIN DEEP' and 'The Angel in the House', and three solo shows with Karolina Albricht, Lydia Makin and Brynley Odu Davies 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 BA, 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

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