

PICTORUM GALLERY PRESENTS

TAKING A BROOM TO THE WASPS' NEST

JO DENNIS – KIM BOOKER – LYDIA HAMBLET

PIA ORTUNO – RHIANNON SALISBURY

SUNYOUNG HWANG – YAYA YAHIE LIANG

01.12.22 – 21.12.22

Pictorum Gallery London is delighted to present Taking a Broom to the Wasp's Nest. This will be the gallery's inaugural exhibition, showing the work of seven exceptional women abstract artists: Jo Dennis, Kim Booker, Lydia Hamblet, Pia Ortuno, Rhiannon Salisbury, Sunyoung Hwang, Yaya Yajie Liang. The title of the exhibition, Taking a Broom to the Wasp's Nest, is taken from the poem Abstract by Connie Wanek. The title touches on a sense of urgency and movement, responding directly to both the formal elements of the artists' works and the wider art historical context that they exist within.

Throughout art history, abstract painting has been supposedly dominated by men, and largely remembered as a movement defined by the paint-slinging, hard-drinking machismo of its poster boys Jackson Pollock and Willem de Kooning. The women who helped define and push the movement forward have consequently fallen out of the art historical spotlight, reduced to titles such as 'wife of' or 'disciple'. According to (mostly male) art historians, it was Kandinsky (1866 – 1944) who birthed the movement through his work Untitled (1910), paving the way for male artists such as Rothko, de Kooning, Pollock, and Modrian to dominate. However it was in fact Swedish painter Hilma af Klint (1862-1944) that created the first abstract compositions in 1905, 5 years before the so-called "father of abstraction" Kandinsky. Her work, alongside other pioneering women artists such as Agnes Martin, are testament to the powerful backdrop of women who heavily influence abstract artists today. Taking a Broom to the Wasp's Nest tracks seven artist's unique contemporary interpretation of 'abstract', whilst placing them firmly within their feminist art historical context. The exhibition highlights the fluidity, individuality, and freedom inherent in abstraction, regardless of gender, presenting the vastness of what can be considered abstract.

Sunyoung Hwang's canvases feature washes of acrylic and oil on canvas, representative of memories and emotions, they ooze calm, creating a cathedral-like experience of meditation and reflection. Colour is integral to her practice, addressing the exchange between an individual and their environment. This is juxtaposed to recent RCA graduate Jo Dennis, whose works – made from recycled tent materials – are ragged, raw and transformative. Dennis creates works that often feel more architectural than wall-based, relying heavily on the inherent qualities of her materials to create artworks that intertwine rebuilding, with transformation and memory. Dennis' works thus allow for a multitude of interpretations, meaning something different to each viewer that interacts with her work.

Pia Ortuno's works straddle painting, sculpture and installation. The artist's practice is rooted in her experiences growing up in Costa Rica – religion, colour and architecture feed into the lengthy process behind each work. Featuring rusted nails and even objects found whilst mud larking around London, Ortuno uses her materials to investigate the passage of time, rituals and materiality. The viewer is forced to stop and analyse the details of each work, surveying each object as an individual form as well as something that is a part of a larger object. Much like Hwang's works, Ortuno is able to generate an atmosphere of calm contemplation through her investigation of abstraction.

Works by Yaya Yajie Liang, Kim Booker and Rhiannon Salisbury hint at figuration and narrative whilst also focusing on the formal qualities of their respective mediums. Liang, who is completing a PhD at the RCA in London, creates abstract worlds in which paint layers metamorphose women into human/animal hybrids. The fluidity of paint and broadness of brushstrokes create a hazy world in which paint and flesh merge.

In Kim Booker's practice, the history of painting, and in particular the history of modern art, are key. Taking influence from German Expressionism, as well as American abstract expressionism, Booker presents paintings that showcase the intensity and physicality of her process. Booker considers her works as semi-autobiographical, painting what it feels like to experience the world as a woman, from within her mind and body. Her paintings contain multiple layers of paint, veiling and unveiling feminine figures with sharp brushstrokes and vast gestural movements. Linear mark makings are juxtaposed by more organic forms and movements, creating a sense of balance and calm in their composition. Booker's paintings are usually large in scale, often serving as an extension of her body and providing an environment where memories and emotions can be explored intuitively.

Lydia Hamblet's practice spans painting, print, drawing and public installation. Reflecting on shared encounters, spaces and environments, her work invites the viewer to consider contemporary life, not in its traditional pop language but rather through the very energies and situations that bring it into being. Marcel Proust writes 'We relive our past years not in their continuous sequence, day by day, but in a memory focused upon the coolness or the sunshine of some morning or afternoon.' Ongoing research within Hamblet's work draws upon personal narratives around the weather. Colour and form takes precedence, with a powerful sense of movement generated through her large scale works. Despite the differences in each artist's individual worlds, they unite over a shared sense of universality. A universality to be free with their mediums, to focus on composition, depth, subject matter and paint, whilst still communicating the inner worlds of each artist.

The Artists

Jo Dennis is a British artist working and living in London. She studied BA Fine Art at Goldsmiths College London (2002) and MA Painting at the Royal College of Art London (2022). Recent exhibitions include; *Absent without Leave*, (solo) Sid Motion Gallery, Pigeon Park 2, *God of War* at OSHH Projects London, *Summer Show* at Eve Leibe Gallery, *Small is Beautiful* at Flowers Gallery, *Autonomous Zone*, (solo) Sid Motion Gallery London, and *Post Vandalism* at Het Hem, Amsterdam. She has been featured in the *Financial Times Magazine*, *British Journal of Photography*, *The Washington Post*, *Unseen Platform*, *The Art Newspaper*, *Port*, *Fad Magazine*, *White Walls*, and *AnOther*. She is the co-founder of *Asylum* and *Maverick Projects* an artist lead organisation running project spaces in London. From 2016 - 18 she founded and curated *AMP Gallery* a not-for-profit gallery. She is the co-founder of *Pigeon Park* and *Peckham 24 Photography Festival* and was the recipient of Grants for the Arts from Arts Council England.

Kim Booker has a BA from Oxford University (2005) and a BFA from City and Guilds of London Art School (2019). She has recently moved to the Tracey Emin studios in Margate, where she now lives and works. Recent exhibitions include *June is the Saddest Month* (solo), *Annka Kultys Gallery*, London (2022); *Road to Somewhere* (group), *The Room Gallery* London (2022); *Kiaf Seoul* (group), *Jari Lager Gallery*, South Korea (2022); *Voices for Love* (group), *Prior Art Space*, Barcelona (2022); *Art Paris* (group), *Galerie Dutko*, Paris (2022); *An Arcadian Kind of Love* (group), *Soho Revue Gallery*, London (2022).

Yaya Yajie Liang has a BA Fine Art China Central Academy of Fine Arts (2018) and a MA Painting at Royal College of Art (2020). She is doing Ph.D. research at Royal College of Art since 2020. Yaya has been shortlisted for *The Waverton Art Prize* (2022). Recent exhibitions include *Simon Lee Gallery*, London, UK (2022); *180 The Strand*, London, UK (2022); *Southwark Park Galleries*, London, UK (2022); *YuYuan Gallery*, Suzhou, China (2021); *Fold Gallery*, London, UK (2020); *Josh Lilley's Gallery*, London, UK (2020); *Unit 1 Gallery*, London, UK (2020). Yaya currently lives and works in London, UK.

Sunyoung Hwang is a London based artist who received her BFA in Fine Art from the Slade School of Fine Art in 2012 and completed a MA in Painting at the Royal College of Art in 2016. Hwang was longlisted for *Jackson's Painting Prize* (2020), selected as a finalist for *Young Contemporary Talent* (2018) and the winner of the *Chadwell Award* (2016). She has previously participated in *Hangar Residency* at *Hangar Artistic Research Centre*, Lisbon (2019) and *SÍM Residency* at *The Association of Icelandic Visual Artists*, Reykjavík (2015). Hwang's solo and duo shows include: *'Convergence and Collapse'*, *Grove Collective*, London (2021); *'I Feel Guilty About Missing You. Because I Didn't Feel Guilty About Leaving You'*, *Galerie ERD*, Seoul (2019); *'The Echoes of Forgotten Nights'*, *The Chadwell Award 2016-17 Winner's Exhibition*, *Nunnery Gallery*, London (2018); *'Liminal Moment'*, *Project Gallery*, Arundel (2016). Recently group exhibitions include: *'Untitled Art'* with *Cob Gallery*, Miani (2022); *'Vanguards'*, *Unit London*, London (2022); *'Through The Prism'*, *Gillian Jason Gallery*, London (2022); *'That Wilderness Within'*, *PRIOR Art Space* Barcelona (2022); *'In Awe of You'*, *Liliya Art Gallery*, London (2022); *'Swimming Backwards'*, *Sid Motion Gallery*, London (2021)

Pía Ortuño is a Costa Rican artist currently living and working in London. She graduated from the University of Costa Rica with a BA in fine arts (2019) and later moved to Pietrasanta, Italy to work and learn ancient marble and bronze techniques. She apprenticed under Jimenez Deredia in his Carrara studio and worked at the Fonderia Artistic Mariani (2020). She is the Co-founder of Sala Salon (2021) and recently graduated from Painting at the RCA (2022). Ortuño has exhibited in the UK and internationally. Recent exhibitions include Stables Gallery in Switzerland, Helen J. Gallery in Los Angeles, and Fold Gallery in London.

Rhiannon Salisbury lives and works in London. She graduated from the Turps Banana Studio Painting Program in 2018, having previously completed her MA in Fine Art at Chelsea College of Art (2016). Recent exhibitions and projects include: "Chthonia" (2022- Solo Exhibition at Arusha Gallery, "Femininity" (2021 - Solo Exhibition) and "Habitual Submission" (2019 - Solo Exhibition) at Delphian Gallery, "Show Stopper" and "Synthesis" (Group Exhibition's) at Saatchi Gallery w. Delphian Gallery (2022), "Antisocial Isolation" (Group Exhibition) at Saatchi Gallery w. Delphian Gallery (2021), Ancient Deities (Group Exhibition, also curator) at Arusha Gallery (Edinburgh, 2020), Small Is Beautiful XXXVII (Group Exhibition) at Flowers Gallery (London, 2019), Ultra: Art For The Woman's World Cup (Group Exhibition) at J. Hammond Projects, presented by OOF Magazine (London, 2019). Recent achievements include, winning The Darbyshire Prize For Emerging Art, being awarded The John Hoyland Scholarship, and being selected to undertake a residency and exhibition in Guadalajara, Mexico.

Lydia Hamblet graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2020, and previously from Camberwell College of Art. She recently presented a solo exhibition of work including a major new commission at AMP Gallery, London. Previous exhibitions include group shows with Felt Collections, SZN Gallery, Aora Space, The Auction Collective, Saatchi Gallery and Peer Gallery. She is also the recipient of the 2020 Clifford Chance Printmaker's Purchase Prize and the Kingsgate Project Space 16:9 Billboard Commission.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Pictorum Gallery London is a contemporary art gallery that presents exceptional artists from around the world, with the inaugural space on Great Titchfield, London. The Gallery presents up-to-date and highly curated exhibitions, with a specific focus on Women and POC artists. Pictorum Gallery embraces a transparent, unique and highly researched curatorial approach, maintaining a strong relationship with the artists it showcases. The gallery also fosters strong relationships with institutions, collectors and curators worldwide. Pictorum Gallery seeks to nurture and incubate new talent by offering artists a dynamic, inclusive and supportive environment through which they can be introduced to both our London-based and international collectors. Working closely and alongside the gallery are the Pictorum Advisors, who are based between London, Milan and America. Our advisors work with clients to develop outstanding collections of both emerging and more established artists, whilst also furthering relationships with other museums, galleries and institutions.

Pictorum Gallery London will launch its first annual Incubator Art Prize in 2023, and will expand its presence within London and Europe through new spaces and the attendance of art fairs.