

JUNE: A Painting Show**09 June – 15 August 2015****62 Kingly St London W1****Tuesday – Saturday, 11 – 6pm**

For the summer of 2015, Sadie Coles HQ presents *June: A Painting Show*, an exhibition of paintings by an international selection of artists. The display traces various modes of representation that have come to define figurative painting in recent decades, or to move the medium altogether beyond categories such as 'figurative' and 'abstract'. Bringing together artists of diverse generations and genres, the exhibition centres on the body as a contradictory object – graceful and abject, mundane and mutable.

Through a focus on artists' figuring or reconfiguring of the human form, *June: A Painting Show* reflects the ways in which painters have increasingly dispensed with – or drastically conflated – the discrete '-isms' and ideological camps of earlier generations. The paintings of Chicago-based Jonathan Gardner compress the styles and motifs of Modernism into flattened, near-cartoonish tableaux whose denseness is at odds with their dilation of meaning and mood, steering clear of either pastiche or homage. The portraits of late Welsh-American painter Sylvia Sleigh present their subjects in seemingly candid and 'realist' terms, while rebounding subtly against the conventions of portraiture and setting naturalism in tension with stylisation. The two female figures in Australian painter Helen Johnson's *Post-colonial Feminist Drama* (2012) meanwhile appear dislocated both from one another and from the frieze of sketch-like historical references behind them, in what might be an allegory of the painter's eternal predicament – squaring up to history and grappling with 'anxiety of influence'.

Various works in the exhibition evince the impact of non-realist idioms including the decorative or the diagrammatic, while also manifesting art's broader annexation of digital aesthetics and processes. Iraqi artist Hayv Kahraman adapts traditional Persian miniatures into enigmatic vignettes whose Arabic captions ground the scenes within contemporary reality. In the works of American painter Mernet Larsen, everyday scenes are wrought into boxy geometry redolent of origami or rudimentary computer models, teasing apart the age-old dialectics of illusion and surface, volume and flatness: "What you see determines how you see it, that has pretty much governed my whole life", she has commented. "The content determines the form." Pictorial space is more radically collapsed in the expansive compositions of Filipino artist Rodel Tapaya, in which figural and natural forms interlock into a tapestry-like allegory – bodies, objects and symbols commingling at the forefront of the picture plane. In the works of Iraqi-born painter Ahmed Alsoudani, teeming bundles of imagery (free-floating corpuscles, eyes, fragments of pattern) appear to press up against the painted surface, teetering on the brink of indecipherability.

This folding or flattening of pictorial space is paralleled, in many of the paintings, by a process of historical 'folding together'. Resonances of Hieronymus Bosch's *Garden of Earthly Delights*, Henri Rousseau's exotic forests or Stanley Spencer's pastoral dreamscapes flow together, for example, with those of Pop art and pop culture. Refracting art-historical influences in this way, many of the artists surveyed in the show acknowledge the inevitable historicity of their medium at the same time as affirming its enduring urgency. Throughout, the human figure articulates many of the fundamental contrasts (formal and conceptual) underpinning contemporary painting – between coherence and fragmentation, history and timelessness, or calculation and naiveté. Contorted, caricatured or multiplied, the body in its many guises comes to speak of the plurality and multivalence of painting itself.

June: A Painting Show will run from 09 June to 29 August 2015. Artists in the exhibition include Ahmed Alsoudani (b. 1975, Baghdad), Nicole Eisenman (American, b. 1965), Jana Euler (b. 1982, Friedberg, Germany), Jonathan Gardner (b. 1982, Lexington, Kentucky), Helen Johnson (b. 1979, Melbourne), Hayv Kahraman (b. 1981, Baghdad), Yamashita Kikuji (Japanese, 1919-1986), Mernet Larsen, (b. 1940, Houghton, Michigan), Ryan Mosley (b. 1980, Chesterfield, UK), Barbara Rossi (American, b. 1940), Pieter Schoolwerth (b. 1970, St. Louis, Missouri), Sylvia Sleigh (Welsh-American, 1916–2010), Rodel Tapaya (b. 1980, Rodriguez, Rizal, Philippines), Co Westerik (b. 1924, The Hague, Netherlands).

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