

Petzel

A Love Letter to a Nightmare

July 15 – August 14, 2020

456 West 18th Street

The skeleton was as happy as a madman whose straitjacket had been taken off. He felt liberated at being able to walk without flesh. The mosquitoes didn't bite him anymore. He didn't have to have his hair cut. He was neither hungry nor thirsty, hot nor cold. He was far from the lizard of love.

–Leonora Carrington, *The Seventh Horse and Other Tales*

As we reopen, Petzel Gallery is pleased to present *A Love Letter to a Nightmare*, a summer group exhibition that will be on view from July 15 – August 14 at the gallery's Chelsea location.

The exhibition's premise is to take into consideration contemporary visual modes and expressions that trace back to historical movements such as Surrealism, Symbolism and Pop, through the lens of our current uncertain existence. Call it vamped Surrealism and Symbolism. The show ponders how the aesthetic of modern surrealism/symbolism has been dressed up and added upon, sexualized, feminized, and reworked in the 21st Century. How does the state of a bound subconscious affect these artworks? This has become especially prevalent while the world shelters from the coronavirus pandemic and confronts centuries of inequity in a moment of historic unrest and great potential for revolutionary change. Beneath our daily struggle for normalcy bubbles a shared unconscious anxiety, fear, loneliness, despair, and trepidation of the future. In these times, the fabric of society is now both flattened into two dimensions as we socialize through screens – from our Zoom meetings, family check-ins, and “cocktails with friends,” to the daily State and Federal news conferences, Instagram stories, and Tik Tok videos – and yet simultaneously burst open in valiant action both intellectual and physical as we gather, protest, and organize in efforts to reimagine and rebuild a more just world. Our dreams have become more “vivid” and “menacing,” according to The New York Times, and, of course, in fantasy there is room for radical possibility. How might these practices of contemporary Surrealism, Symbolism and Pop, be read and implemented in reaction to the current upheaval? As one of the artists offered – how might these daydreams and nightmares be used as “forms of resistance, or in addressing trauma, enfranchising the masses, and envisioning necessary escape?” The exhibition asks how does each artist's subjective work – painting, sculpture, installation, and video – explain a world riddled with multiple “objective” truths?

A Love Letter to a Nightmare includes work by Danica Barboza, Genesis Belanger, Meriem Bennani, Sascha Braunig, Florencia Escudero, Hadi Fallahpisheh, Anna Glantz, Ivy Haldeman, Christina Quarles, Emily Mae Smith, and Greg Parma Smith.

Petzel Gallery thanks all the participating artists and their galleries for their collaboration: C L E A R I N G, Downs & Ross, David Lewis, LOMEX, Kristen Lorello, Perrotin, Regen Projects, and Simone Subal Gallery.

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About the Artists

Danica Barboza (b. 1988, New York) is a multimedia artist who elaborates a rich personal mythology through the mediums of sculpture, drawing, writing and assemblage. Her work portrays a mystical marriage between her and a mythologized lover, and in her sculptures' shifting identities she explores questions around celebrity, psychology, and desire. She had her first institutional solo exhibition at Schinkel Pavillon, Berlin, Germany in 2020, and recent exhibitions with Lomex (New York) and Galerie Buchholz (Cologne).

Genesis Belanger (b. 1978, USA) Belanger's work is characterized by the treatment of objects as surrogates for the body. Sculpted in porcelain and stoneware, metal work and upholstery and tinted in fondant hues, everyday objects take on human features, made uncomfortably familiar as they begin to resemble us. Belanger's sculptures address themes such as feminism and the objectification of the female body, the psychology of consumerism and power structures in modern history. Belanger has upcoming museum solo shows at Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, in Ridgefield, Connecticut (September 2020) and the Consortium Museum in Dijon, France (April 2021).

Meriem Bennani (b. 1988 in Rabat, Morocco) lives and works in Brooklyn, USA. She received her BFA from Cooper Union, New York in 2012, and her MFA from the Ecole Nationale Supérieure des Arts Décoratifs, Paris in 2011. Solo exhibitions of her work have been held at C L E A R I N G Brooklyn; The Kitchen, New York; Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris; Art Dubai; MoMA PS1, New York; and SIGNAL, Brooklyn. Her work has also been featured in numerous group exhibitions, including Whitney Biennial, New York; Biennale de l'Image en Mouvement, Geneva / Turin; Public Art Fund, New York; Shanghai Biennale; Jewish Museum, New York; Saatchi Gallery, London; MANA Contemporary, New Jersey; and Palais de Tokyo, Paris. Her exhibition, Party on the CAPS, is currently on view at the Julia Stoschek Collection, Berlin. Later in 2020, she will have a public commission at LAX airport. Meriem Bennani's work is part of the collections of the Guggenheim Museum, New York; Whitney Museum of American Art, New York; Musée d'Art Moderne de Paris; Fondation Cartier, Paris; Kadist Foundation, Paris; and FRAC Ile-de-France, Paris.

Sascha Braunig (b. 1983, Qualicum Beach, BC) is a painter who creates nontraditional portraits and still lifes. Even as Braunig reduces bodies to witch-like cut-outs, barbed skeletons, or wireforms lit with an internal neon glow, she finds a possibility for expressing freedom and tensile strength through these humanoid scaffolds. In 2016 Braunig had a solo exhibition at MoMA PS1, and her work was featured in the 2015 New Museum Triennial. She holds a BFA from The Cooper Union and an MFA in painting from Yale University. Braunig was awarded a studio residency from the Sharpe-Walentas Studio Program in 2016–2017, a Pollock-Krasner Foundation award in 2016, and a Macdowell Colony Fellowship in 2013.

Florencia Escudero (b. 1987, Singapore) is a multimedia artist recognized for her soft sculptures that use fabric printed with digitally rendered images. Her work aims to flip the narrative of the objectification of the female body. Escudero received her MFA from the Yale University School of Art and her BFA from the School of Visual Arts. Her works have been shown at the Instituto Cervantes, New York and the Pratt Institute, New York.

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Hadi Fallahpisheh (b. 1987, Tehran) is a multimedia artist that specializes in photography, performance and installation. Often commenting on conditions of displacement, his work questions the ability of representation to convey truths, revealing the gaps between public perception and personal experience. Fallahpisheh received the Artadia Award in 2019, and his work was included in 2020 in the group exhibition “In Practice: Total Disbelief” at the Sculpture Center.

Anna Glantz (b. 1989, Concord, MA) creates paintings that consider the poetic connections between personal, invented, and historical imagery set within psychological landscapes. She received a BA in Art and Linguistics from the University of California, Los Angeles and an MFA in Visual Art from Columbia University. In 2020 she will have her first UK solo exhibition at The Approach in London.

Ivy Haldeman (b. 1985, Aurora, CO; lives and works in New York) is recognized for her nuanced, and disarmingly languorous, renderings of anthropomorphized sausages swathed in pillowy buns, pantomime hand gestures, slapstick unions of heels and banana peels, and women’s suits depleted of bodies – illuminating relations between consumerism and desire while both allegorizing and eroticizing slippages among the unequal distributions of finance and femininity. Her work has been the subject of recent solo exhibitions at Downs & Ross, New York, and Capsule, Shanghai. The artist received her BFA from the Cooper Union in 2008.

Christina Quarles (b. 1985, Chicago, IL) paints abstracted figures that are subject to identity politics. Her gestural, distorted human forms explore the ways in which race, gender, and sexuality intersect to form complex identities. She will have a solo exhibition at Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago in 2021, and her work was included in the group exhibitions “Made in LA” at the Hammer Museum; “Fictions” at the Studio Museum in Harlem; and “Trigger: Gender as a Tool and a Weapon” at the New Museum.

Emily Mae Smith (b. 1979, Austin, TX) is an artist whose subject matter plows the Surrealist genre with Feminist psychology. She layers her paintings with popular and underrepresented Art Historical references, often marrying them with pop culture motifs. Smith has had solo exhibitions at Le Consortium, Dijon and the Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, Connecticut.

Greg Parma Smith (b. 1983, Cambridge, MA) creates visionary paintings that combine mystical symbology with a personal and experimental painterly language that draws upon and synthesizes languages from the Renaissance, medieval illustration, as well as modernisms from Miro to Jasper Johns. Martha Schwendener explained: “His ultimate tactic seems to be to show how painting can accommodate multiple ideas and worldviews, rather than what art’s gatekeepers allow at a given moment.” Smith’s work was presented in a solo exhibition at Musée d’art moderne et contemporain, Genève in 2017 and was included in a two-person exhibition at the Contemporary Art Museum, St. Louis in 2010.

Petzel Gallery is located at 456 West 18th Street New York, NY 10011. Gallery hours are Tuesday through Friday from 10:00 AM–6:00 PM. For press inquiries, please contact Ricky Lee at ricky@petzel.com, or call (212) 680-9467.