

Cece Philips
Walking the In-Between
April 28 – June 11, 2023
Opening Friday, April 28, 5 – 8PM

Peres Projects is pleased to present *Walking the In-Between*, Cece Philips' (b. 1996 in London, UK) second solo exhibition with the gallery, and her first in Asia.

Five months have passed since Cece Philips' previous exhibition with Peres Projects. Or maybe just a single night. The characters we left in the twilight of Berlin now emerge in the dawn light of Seoul. With *Walking the In-Between*, Philips continues to explore liminal spaces, times, and situations. She invites us to take long strolls through a composite cosmopolis reminiscent of London, Florence and California, draped in the hues of the blue hour, and inhabited by suited women. At this time between day and night—between dog and wolf, as a French expression goes—a mysterious atmosphere lingers over each tableau. We observe each scene from its periphery—through an open window, from the opposite sidewalk, from behind a bush or a sofa—, Cece Philips deliberately placing us in a voyeuristic position. While gazing is usually welcome and anticipated in a gallery, here our glances become “clandestine,” as writer and researcher Rolake Osabia writes in the short story accompanying the exhibition, entitled “Please Follow the Yellow Light.” Complementing the nine paintings that comprise *Walking the In-Between*, Osabia's text offers an interpretation of Philips' work, narrating the wanderings of an anonymous observer, whose perspective could be that of the artist just as well as the viewer.

In this new body of work, Philips delves deeper into the politics of the gaze by grappling with the figure of the *flâneur*. The promenade becomes a device to question how women, and in particular women of color, occupy and experience public space. An archetype of modernity, the *flâneur*, usually a male, is an acute, yet detached, observer of modern urban life. In *The Painter of Modern Life* (1863), Charles Baudelaire describes the *flâneur*: “To be away from home and yet to feel at home anywhere; to see the world, to be at the very center of the world, and yet to be unseen of the world, such are some of the minor pleasures of those independent, intense and impartial spirits [...]. The observer is a prince enjoying his incognito wherever he goes.”

Through her practice, Philips highlights the privilege implied by such a posture. Belonging anywhere, wandering and watching without risk and without arousing suspicion, is a luxury that many are not afforded. As both an artist and a woman, Philips observes as much as she is observed, and *Walking the In-Between* straddles both stances. “What is it to be seen? What is it to invite the gaze of the other? What is it to belong?” are questions that run throughout the exhibition.

In these paintings, women reclaim the streets, clubs, and bars—spaces traditionally hostile to them, especially at nightfall. Wearing crimson suits and top hats, Philips' noble and unknowable characters seem to belong to a secret society, a timeless sisterhood, such as the one congregating in *The Green House* (2023). With windowless eyes, some face the viewer without deigning to meet their gaze. The figures are distant and closed off, like the gatekeepers in *I Spy A Stranger* (2023) and *Blues in the Night* (2023), thus shifting the power dynamic between the observer and the observed. Although Philips' paintings resist any mutual exchange of gazes, they reflect the viewer's own image back at them by means of a mirror (*Reflections*, 2023) or a window (*Midsummer Music*, 2023), as if to remind them of their voyeuristic and intrusive position.

While the blue hour hinders sight and covers the familiar with a veil of strangeness, it also corresponds to the moment when homes are lit up and windows become showcases, revealing domestic intimacy to passersby. In Philips' paintings, this is depicted through bright yellow hues that contrast the blue tones of dusk. Like a beacon in the night, this yellow light that the observer in Osabia's story relentlessly pursues conveys a musicality, that of a sociability out of reach. Indeed, behind the windows, through doors left ajar, the scenes we glimpse are blurred and inaccessible, thus leaving us on the threshold of night.

This is Cece Philips' second solo exhibition with Peres Projects and her first in Asia. In 2021, she had her debut solo exhibition *I See in Colour* at HOME, London. Since then, she has had solo exhibitions *The Night Has a Thousand Eyes* at Peres Projects in Berlin (2022), *Between The Dog And The Wolf* at ADA Contemporary Art Gallery in Accra (2022), and *Memories of The Future* at Post Gallery in Zurich (2021). In addition, Philips has participated in numerous group exhibitions, including Cob Gallery, London (2023), Taymour Grahne Projects, London (2022), Ojiri Gallery, London (2022), Gillian Jason Gallery, London, curated by Jade Foster (2021), Mall Galleries, London (2021), and J/M Gallery, London (2021). She is currently exhibiting in Veuve Clicquot's global travelling group exhibition *Solaire Culture*.

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