

MONICA DE CARDENAS

Benjamin Senior *Screening*

Opening

Saturday 27 July 2024
6 pm

On View

from 27.07.2024
to 07.09.2024

Hours

Tuesday - Saturday
3 – 7 pm
and by appointment

Monica De Cardenas is delighted to present *Screening*, a solo exhibition by **Benjamin Senior** alongside fellow London based artist and friend Anna Freeman Bentley, whom the artist personally introduced to the gallery.

Senior approaches his work as a social realist by walking the streets and making daily observations of multicultural London. However, once the work is underway, the approach shifts to painting in a formalist manner, constructing the painting to achieve an abstract unity. He is drawn to commonplace scenes that we might pass by on autopilot, like the bus stops and commercial storefronts seen throughout the exhibition. The title *Screening* has a multitude of layers and meanings; there are the phone screens most people are nowadays fixated on, the fashion billboard screens that colorfully light up streets, the storefront windows that try to lure the street traffic to come inside to shop.

"By painting it, I'm interested in finding the abstract and unfamiliar beauty of that scene. After the viewer has seen my painting, I hope their vision of the world is colored by it" says Senior.

Every day people are represented alongside images of models advertising perfumes and fashion brands. Mannequins are lined up in rows displaying clothes for sale, like figures of desire. Uncanny fragments – heads without bodies, bodies without heads – longing to be whole, the unity of the painting's composition replacing the parts that are missing. At the bus stop, the models gazing out from the posters are an acknowledgement of the representational nature of painting itself of course, but these paintings reference their artificiality in other ways too. The tall black frame of the bus stop shelter evokes the black frame of a smartphone screen – a frame that figures step in and out of, lean against, sit within and gaze at their own smartphones.

Somewhat unsettling is the way human figures are used as material for a rhythmic tableau, just as the figures walking the streets are no different to the mannequins in the shop windows. All are parts in a machine, making the implication we are as well.

Painted using the early Renaissance technique of egg tempera, the image is gradually built up over dozens of thin layers. Over time the colours are carefully tuned; figures and elements are painted, repainted, revised and swapped out until all the elements synergize with one another. Like solving a puzzle, works sometimes take weeks or months before all the pieces fit into place. The result is a highly choreographed frozen moment. Tempera painting brings a hard-edged stillness to the image, which Senior seeks to counter by introducing optical tensions such as repetition (rows of mannequins), patterns and shifts of scale (background posters).

Benjamin Senior (b.1982, Southampton, UK) lives and works in London. Senior completed a BA in painting at Wimbledon School of Art before graduating with an MA in painting from the Royal College of Art in 2010. Recent solo exhibitions include at Carl Freedman Gallery, James Fuentes, New York, Bolte Lang, Zurich, Studio Voltaire, London and Galleria Monica de Cardenas, Milan. Selected group exhibitions include *Breakfast Under the Tree* at Carl Freedman Gallery, Margate, *End Game* at Turps Gallery, London and *Slow Painting* at Hayward Gallery, London which then toured the UK.