

MONICA DE CARDENAS

Anna Freeman Bentley
make shift

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 announce ***make shift*** by **Anna Freeman Bentley**, the London based artist's first solo exhibition in Switzerland.

Using architectural imagery, Freeman Bentley's paintings explore the emotive potential of space and its associations with longing. Inspired by real encountered spaces, her works portray fractured, mirrored or fabricated environments that become hard to locate.

This new series of paintings and works on paper explores adapted interior spaces around a film set, shot on location in an historic house museum in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

In the central triptych *Vanity of the vanities* (2024), a circle of ornate mirrors reflect a lavish dressing room adapted to become the costume department, where actors would have clothes pinned and fitted to be viewed from all angles. The green en-suite bathroom in *Forms of imitation I* (2024) is packed with costumes that actors require to embody their characters, yet in the paintings, there are no people, the viewer is left with remnants of attire on a clothing rail. One senses the hustle and bustle of movement in the space, as if only recently vacated: a fan sits motionless, a discarded script lies on a bed, bags of fabric and props are left lying on the floor. Such activity appears in contrast to the opulent surroundings; but, for a time, these rooms become the makeshift work spaces required to produce a film.

Every painting in the exhibition features the motif of a mirror, a reflective object synonymous with vanity that can alter our reading of spatial depth. These being paintings, we are reminded of our distance from the space depicted, since we cannot be reflected in the mirror and projected into the rooms. In *Becoming* (2024), we glimpse a spacious bathroom, complete with historic paintings, that has been transformed into the make-up department, where actors "put on" their characters. In all the paintings there is a sense of "putting on", of transformation, both by what takes place in each room and by how the paintings invite us to interpret such temporary stagings. By presenting images of rooms affected by the crew, rather than images of the set itself, the artist asks us to consider how interiors can be dressed and made flexible to perform certain roles and express broader concepts.

The paintings that form ***make shift*** are a continuation of the artist's ongoing investigation into ideas of illusion and artifice found in the fabricated spaces of film sets. Her previous body of work *make believe* explored a film about an artist working in the UK in the 1920's. This recent film, set on location in Saudi Arabia, serendipitously produced further autobiographical resonances: a coming of age drama set in the 1980's offering numerous parallels with her own childhood as an ex-pat growing up in Bangkok in the same decade.

Anna Freeman Bentley (London, 1982) received her BA from Chelsea College of Art and Design in 2004 and her MA from the Royal College of Art in London in 2010, where she lives and works. In 2019 she participated in the artist residency at Palazzo Monti, Brescia and in 2012 the Artist in Restaurant residency at Michelin-starred restaurant Pied a Terre in London. Her work was included in the Prague Biennale 5 and Bloomberg New Contemporaries. Selected exhibitions include: Massimo de Carlo, Piece Unique (July 2024), Grimm Gallery, Amsterdam; Lyndsey Ingram, London; Frestonian Gallery, London; Space K, Seoul and DENK Gallery, Los Angeles. The artist will also have a solo show in October this year with Anat Ebgj Gallery in Los Angeles. Her works are included in the Tia Collection, Santa Fe; Museum X in Beijing; Hotel Crillon in Paris; Hogan Lovells in London; and the Ahmanson Collection in Irvine, California.