

# Mary Mary

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## Aliza Nisenbaum

13 June - 1 August 2015

Mary Mary is delighted to announce a solo exhibition with New York based Aliza Nisenbaum, her first in the UK. In this exhibition of new paintings, Nisenbaum explores the notion of an expanded portraiture through what she refers to as “reciprocal modes of attention” that obtain in her practice of observing her subjects.

Recently Nisenbaum has focused on the subject of the undocumented immigrant, creating portraits of Mexican and South American immigrants to the United States that she meets in New York. These paintings create documents of the undocumented. The slow process of observational painting that Nisenbaum employs generates the conditions for encounter and conversational exchange between herself and her sitters, which often include group portraits spanning generations.

In these new paintings Nisenbaum continues her work giving visibility to the undocumented but juxtaposes them with others who populate her daily life—artists, friends, coworkers, students, her partner. In this apparent incongruity, a commonality emerges. What these portraits have in common is that they all depict creative makers. In ‘Hector’ 2015 a dark-skinned man appears half-asleep before his ceramic sculpture, while in ‘Erin’ 2015 a pale young woman, an artist, gazes outside the frame, dwarfed by what appears to be a painting of a dark-skinned woman her age. The choice to depict these disparate subjects in such remote proximity only underscores the social, racial, and class differences that divide them. They ask, why is it that people engaged in the same activities are separated categorically? In these recent paintings the social is underscored by the singular in each subject.

The paintings leave the viewer wondering at the reciprocated attention of Nisenbaum’s subjects. How much access does she allow us to their in-turned gazes? A remote proximity underlies the attitudes and gesture of the figures she represents. The figures are lost in half-sleep hemmed in by plants, artworks, vibrant patterns and fields of pure colour. They are as open as they are aloof, unaware of Nisenbaum’s, and by proxy, our presence. This is the tension in the paintings, the delicate interplay of paint that rests up against the surface of the canvas offering itself to sensuous perception, touching our eye, even as the subject we gaze on claims the right to be remote, unapproachable, somewhere else.

She paints textiles and patterns found in the homes of her subjects often allowing them to overrun the objects they surround, disobeying the rules of perspective. An embroidered shirt purchased on a trip home to Mexico is depicted with equal skill and care to that given to the original garment by its maker. Her brushwork echoes the meditative patterns in the depicted embroidery, bringing this craft to bear on her own. Even when figures are absent, the paintings themselves are thus immigrants, physically present, but thinking back to their origins, the sensuous acts of their making. Her depictions show how the space of painting can bring together disparate realities into new and affective configurations.

Born in 1977 in Mexico City, Nisenbaum lives & works in New York. Recent solo shows include *White Columns*, New York & *Portraits, Letters, Books and Flowers*, LULU Project Space, Mexico City (both 2014); *Aliza Nisenbaum & Tadhg McSweeney*, Kevin Kavanagh Gallery, Dublin; *Holly Coulis & Aliza Nisenbaum*, Susanne Hilberry Gallery, Detroit (both 2013); *We Remembered, We Anticipated a Peacock and We Find a Peony*, (with Patricia Trieb), Golden Gallery, New York; *Aliza Nisenbaum New Paintings*, Julius Caesar, Chicago (both 2011). Group exhibitions include *Work*, Slopes Gallery, Melbourne; *Quality of Life*, Recent Rema Hort Mann Grantees, BOSI, New York; *The Last Brucennial*, 837 Washington Street, New York (all 2014); *Imago Mundi*, Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice (2013); *XV Rufino Tamayo Painting Biennial*, Museo Tamayo Arte Contemporaneo, Mexico City (2012).

Forthcoming projects include *Figuratively*, curated by Matthew Higgs, Wilkinson Gallery, London; *Biennial of the Americas*, MCA Denver Museum; *You Dont Bring Me Flowers*, 68 Projects, Berlin (all 2015)