

Press Release

Lisa Brice

Private view: 16 March 2017

Exhibition dates: 17 March – 22 April 2017



Stephen Friedman Gallery is pleased to announce a presentation of new work by Lisa Brice. This will be the artist's first exhibition dedicated to paintings on paper. Vibrant works in cobalt blue gouache will line the walls of 11 Old Burlington Street. Each work is an intimate figurative portrait of feminine power and sensuality.

This will be Brice's first exhibition at Stephen Friedman Gallery. She was born in 1968 in Cape Town and now lives and works in London, also spending time in Trinidad following a residency in 2000. Brice's practice is concentrated on haunting and emotive portraiture. She references art history, images of women in the media and photographs she has taken herself. Brice's work was recently included in the much lauded exhibition 'Making and Unmaking' curated by Duro Olowu, at Camden Arts Centre in London last year.

Brice's paintings mostly depict a woman alone, unprepared to have her portrait painted. They occupy a liminal state: captured in-between dress and undress, looking into a mirror, with their back turned, or stretching and posing for their own delight. This is a private moment, preparing for a public performance that is yet to come. Some seem aware of this gaze upon them, while others are not. In this way Brice's compositions render the viewer as an uneasy or complicit voyeur, allowing a glimpse of a moment of self-reflection and solitude.

Brice's subjects are part of a sisterhood that is engaged in everyday rituals and surrounded by familiar objects. The women's power is elevated by being part of a gathering; a scene of imposing sexuality. Brice's paintings often depict single sex groups that have a sometimes-uneasy and particular awkward energy. These gatherings are both convivial and critical and held together only for a moment.

The shade of blue that Brice uses recalls a sense of twilight: the threshold between night and day. She uses the pigment straight from the tube, creating depth, light and shade with a single colour. For the artist, this particular shade brings to mind the 'Blue Devil', which is a formidable carnival character in Trinidad. Revellers paint their skin blue, allowing them to become emboldened by the character. The pigment used for this

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originally comes from the iconic 'Rickett's Blue' washing powder, which was formulated to bleach white washing but has more recently been implicated in skin bleaching.

In these new works, Brice negotiates the terrain between spontaneous drawing and painting. The artist uses an assured and loose line to map out the body, free from the constraints of formal painting. Repeating imagery powerfully retells a similar story in each one. Presented together, these works have the air of a cinematic storyboard. In this instance there is a defiant strength in the grouping.

Brice's confident and delicate line simply illustrates the complex and often contradictory nature of her subjects. The artist uses fabric, faces, screens and mirrors to distort the viewer's perspective. The compositions are alluring, inviting the viewer to peer into them further while also concealing some information. In doing this some figurative elements become abstracted, making it unclear where the edge of a skirt meets a soft furnishing. Open doors and plants blur the distinction between inside and outside.

In this striking presentation the exhibition space becomes a stage in which Brice's portraits are the performers, props, screens and backdrops. The artist opens a window into the private sphere with fleetingly caught silhouettes that come together to form an overwhelming and absorbing group.

Gallery One: Stephan Balkenhol

Gallery hours: Tuesday to Friday, 10am - 6pm and Saturday, 11am - 5pm

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Notes to Editors:

Notable solo exhibitions include: 'Well Worn', Goodman Gallery, Johannesburg, South Africa (2015); 'Cut Your Coat', French Rivera, London, UK (2014).

Notable group exhibitions include: : 'La Diablesse' Tramps, London, UK' (2017), 'Home Truths: Domestic Interior in South African Collections' curated by Michael Godby, South African National Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa (2016), 'Making & Unmaking', Camden Art Centre, London, UK (2016), 'New Revolutions', Goodman Gallery, Cape Town, South Africa (2016), 'Puppet Show', curated by Tom Bloor and Celine Condorelli, Gavle Konstcentrum, Kultur & Fritid Gavle, Sweden, toured to Grundy Art Gallery, Blackpool, UK (2014).