

New York Exhibition

## This Sacred Vessel (pt.3)

GROUP EXHIBITION

Sept 17 - Dec 20, 2020

Soft opening:

Saturday, Sept 19, 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.



Samantha Rosenwald, *Slit*, 2020, Colored Pencil on Canvas, 28" x 28"

Amanda Boulos  
Peter Dreher  
Dominique Fung  
Molly A Greene

Louisa Gagliardi  
Stephanie Temma Hier  
Greg Ito  
Vincent Larouche

Walter Robinson  
Samantha Rosenwald  
Kenny Rivero  
Brittney Leeanne Williams

Arsenal Contemporary Art New York is pleased to present the final part of the painting series ***This Sacred Vessel***. Past exhibitions looked at the renewed relevance of landscape painting in the face of ecological anxiety and how conversations about marginalized bodies have influenced the way painters represent the human form at a time when images of bodies are pervasive in the media. This second iteration was abruptly interrupted by a global crisis, a pandemic that has left the world – and all of us – profoundly altered. While in recluses in our homes, isolating from friends and relative for weeks at end, we adapted to the slower pace of domestic life. And while we sheltered from a deadly virus, time passed, flowers wilted, fruits decayed.

In the European tradition, still life was the lowest rung of the hierarchy of painting genres. Despite this, inanimate objects constituted a rich library of allegorical symbols, a fertile ground for artists to deal with universal topics such as the passage of time, the fragility of life and the inevitability of death. This exhibition considers the continued strategy of using domestic symbolism to address complex subject matters.

In **Vincent Larouche**'s work, antiquated technology acts as a form of still life. He refers to the nostalgic power of video game consoles from the 90s to testify to a bygone era. **Greg Ito**'s paintings are titled *Time Keeps on Slipping* and *Time Waits For No One*, clearly referring to the ephemeral nature of life. Nowhere is the passage of time so clearly referenced than in the work of the late **Peter Dreher**. Over the course of his life, the German artist painted over 500 images of a single subject: an empty glass atop a kitchen table. These small paintings, unassuming in size (they measure 10 x 8 in) constitute a prodigious body of work.

**Molly A Greene**'s still life paintings blur the lines between natural and unnatural. Under her smooth brushes, flora acquires a psyche of its own and behave in anomalous ways. Similarly, the perceptible and ethereal coexist on the same plane in **Louisa Gagliardi**'s otherworldly paintings. **Samantha Rosenwald** also conjures references to surrealism in her delightful colored pencil canvases, referring to domesticity as a place of both pleasure and anxiety. In turn, **Brittney Leeanne Williams** takes an almost opposite approach. Her depiction of luscious (implied black) female bodies become function as a shelter before the arid landscape on the background. It is as if the figure was turned into a spell-binding fruit on the cusp of transcendence.

**Amanda Boulos** draws from her Palestinian upbringing to find inspiration for her paintings that function like allegorical vignettes. In **Dominique Fung**'s work, objects perform in lieu of bodies to address Western fetishization and mythologizing of Asia – particularly of Asian femininity. **Kenny Rivero** also explores the complexity of identity through paintings that represent psychological states and borrow from pop culture and language.

Still life is among the painting genres that **Walter Robinson** was been investing over the past four decades to address concepts of desire and ideals in American culture. **Stephanie Temma Hier** is the artist in the exhibition that most deliberately positions herself within the heritage of Flemish still lifes. Her exquisite paintings are augmented with elaborate ceramic frames. One can truly appreciate the ingenuity of her work through the clever juxtaposition of subject matters on the pictorial and sculptural grounds.

Far from being all-compassing, this selection of nine artists nevertheless offers a non-exhaustive contemporary demonstration of the versatility of a painting genre used for centuries. These artists have learned the persisting language of inanimate objects to tap into its seemingly infinite symbolism.

Information:

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