

JESSIE MAKINSON

Nobody Axed You To

Opening 21st of November 2019 6–8pm; show runs until 25th of January 2020.

Nobody axed you to is an exhibition featuring series of new commissions by British artist Jessie Makinson. The exhibition comprises large-scale oil paintings on canvas, a painted and carved Paravent, an in-situ wall-installation and several smaller ink and watercolour drawings, showing the variety of the artist's practice. Through her work, Makinson creates a vivid transgressive tableaux, weaving together sources as varied as folklore, ecofeminist writing, art history and science fiction. Entering the gallery space, we are immersed into a cocoon of exuberant, overflowing colored brush strokes dancing across the walls of the gallery. At times, violent, erotic and comical, her multi-layered, tumultuous paintings plunge viewers into eerie, sometimes even absurd, self-contained worlds. In these strange and busy universes, goddesses, witches, hunters, naughty animals, homunculi, plants, diabolic creatures and morphed shadows take part in obscure rituals in the depths of the forest. Beyond their surreal, almost mystical qualities, the scenes remain mischievously grotesque, bursting with colour and sumptuousness.

On the occasion of the exhibition, Makinson covered the walls of the gallery space with an abundance of sweepingly colourful patterns providing further insight into her compositional process. In recent years, she developed a singular process which involves building her works over a previously drawn 'underpainting'— a series of random abstract painted gestures created by mixing dry pigments with an acrylic dispersant. These are composed of fluid yet stringent shapes that colonize the background of the canvases and serve as a starting point for her narratives. The artist's play of form and colour initially resolves into dynamic movements, but from this abstraction emerges a strong and often occult figuration. This intuitive approach forges unexpected assemblages feeding into the artist's rich mythology.

The title of the exhibition is borrowed from Joanna Russ's 1975 feminist science fiction novel *The Female Man*, and alludes to the sharp and quick-witted encounters staged by Makinson's paintings. In her work, each persona awaits a climax. The flora carries an air of mischief. The trees could be poisonous, on the verge of devouring anything that breathes or taking back the oxygen they once provided. Yet, the paintings' exuberance is almost glamorous, so hypnotising that it sublimates the horror. Despite the violence of the works, the characters exhibit cheeky smiles, daring us to have a closer look. What were once hunted, mastered and possessed—nature, women or animals—take a witty revenge. The figures hold gawking poses, at ease, 'a none of your business' attitude, a casual shrug: *Nobody axed you to!*

(Marie-Charlotte Carrier)