

On Longing (Or, Modern Objects Volume II)

02 June - 08 July 2023

Alexandra Barth
Thomas Bils
Hamish Chapman
Grace Lee
Sujin Lee
Tristan Piggott
Paul Roupail
Astrid Styma
Sara Suppan
Caroline Zumerly



BACK POCKET (2023) SARA SUPPAN

Huxley-Parlour are pleased to announce *On Longing*, a group exhibition of 10 international artists. The exhibition seeks to explore modern objecthood and its representation in paint, encoding themes of genesis, destination, and also termination.

The contemporary object has an anxiety of permanence, particularly in our current context: booming global, material economies, and a looming sense of environmental disaster. Here, the contemporary object has a corollary lexicon: production, purpose, utility and waste. This exhibition highlights image making that manifests this anxiety through a focus on materiality - tenderly described, lustrous surfaces, emphatic lighting, pointed, haloed presences.

The exhibition also draws attention to the tacit tension between this serious rendering and a playful attitude towards subject. It is a tension that speaks to both the ambivalence and the fetishisation attached to objects in the current moment. The title of the exhibition is borrowed from poet and critic Susan Stewart's 1993 publication *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* in which Stewart investigates nostalgia, desire and scale through the lens of everyday objects.

Both Paul Roupail and Sara Suppan's work is based in the labour intensive tradition of still-life painting, and yet both include details in order to subtly and playfully undermine their exquisite realism. A directional shaft of light hits a half peeled apple, and a banana is glimpsed emerging from a back pocket, swathed in seductive, dappled shade. Here, ripe fruit becomes a signifier for ephemerality with its attendant ideas of short-lived sweetness and inevitable decay.

Thomas Bils and **Alexandra Barth** focus their attention on interiors laden with evidence of human habitation, yet left radically vacant. Similarly **Astrid Styma**, presents a scene in flux, the table has been precisely laid, but the plates are empty and the cutlery untouched. These works lay bare the objects with which we surround ourselves but often overlook, with each artist rendering their surfaces in rich and sumptuous detail.

The works of **Grace Lee** and **Sujin Lee** take imaginative departure from the contemporary image economy. Sujin Lee often looks to the tropes of horror for her compositions, and Grace Lee's snow globe, based on the ornament in *Citizen Kane*, explores how physical objects are used to hold onto intangible experiences, as well as the romanticism and nostalgia in souvenirs. Using tabloid photography as her source **Caroline Zurmely** closely crops into the material details of media photography: focussing on the shimmering surfaces of shoes, jewellery and clothing under intense flash photography.

Hamish Chapman and **Tristan Piggott** anthropomorphise their objects. For Piggott, creases in the fabric of a handbag become the melancholic features of a downcast face. Hamish Chapman presents a closely cropped composition where tennis balls substitute the components of a human face, combining the hyperreal and the surreal to become an allegory for society, and the strategic behavioural patterns that govern it.

Objects, ephemera, bric-a-brac, stuff. Objects in this exhibition are observed in paint at the micro scale (swirls of woodgrain, light refracted in the curved surface of a spoon, the speckled skin of a banana) yet can be understood in terms of the macro. These works come to reflect the structures and stresses of the current human condition. The meticulous, deadpan rendering of objects bespeaks a specific kind of unease: a contemporary malaise, a telling absence, a longing?

Notes to Editors

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HUXLEY-PARLOUR, 45 Maddox Street, W1S 2PE

OPENING RECEPTION: 01 June, 6–8pm.

Opening hours Monday to Friday, 10:00am - 5:30pm

 Saturday, 10:00am - 1:00pm

Additional information can be found online at www.huxleyparlour.com

T: +44(0)2074344319

E: gallery@huxleyparlour.com