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The Viral Sublime



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Facets of the Female Gaze: "Body," a Group Exhibition at Kristin Hjellegjerde, London

BY HILARY WEBB | NOVEMBER 27, 2017



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Anna Ilsley, *The Arrangement*, oil on canvas, 30 x 20 cm
(KRISTIN HJELLEGJERDE GALLERY, LONDON)

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The title of a provocative group exhibition taking place at the Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery says it all. "Body" is an impressive chance to see bodies through the eyes of the female gaze. Flesh, bone and relationships are all drawn into focuses in this multi-medium exhibition.

"Body" is an amalgamation of sculpture, porcelain works, abstract and figurative canvasses created by six female artists. Maha Ahmed, Annie Attridge, Héloïse Delègue, Rachel Garrard, Anna Ilsley and Katja Larsson have each created visual representations of how they experience the female form and the relationships that stem from it.

Visitors to the gallery will be immediately struck by the scale of Rachel Garrard's abstract and pastel hue canvasses. The geometric lines and shapes pay tribute to the complexity of the female form. Visitors are then confronted with two installations by Swedish born, London-based artist Katja Larsson. One, which is petrified wood cast in flesh-colored silicone, appears almost wet. The folds and crevices of the structure embody some of the cultural stereotypes about the female form but in an unexpected natural and biological way. Larsson's next piece toys with visitors' preconceived expectations as the Jesmonite cast piece first appears to be bone and one wonders if it's a pelvis. Until, that is, it becomes clear that it's the body of a Kawasaki motorcycle.

Annie Attridge puts sexuality on a pedestal with her series of porcelain works, titled "should of could of would of". The pieces depict pairs of females contorted in all manner of sex positions, some with masks on, others without. While the title suggests the works play into Attridge's fantasies, realized or not, there is no doubt that within these sexual pairings, neither female is passive. Refreshingly, both figures are active in practicing their sexuality.

Maha Ahmed delves into a darker color palette as she explores identity of self and the things that influence it. Nature, its textures and sceneries, inspire Ahmed, who grew up in Pakistan, as she explores the influence of gender, race and religion upon natural forms. "A bird meandering in a lucid dream" calls upon an image often associated with female sexuality, the sea, but she presents it in a much darker and stormier context.

Contrasting with Ahmed's works are the light and playful canvasses by Héloïse Delègue. Layers, textures, flesh and comfort are notions that come to mind when you look at Delègue's series, particularly the piece "Terrain". Textiles are layered and veiled across her canvasses to evoke ideas about gender hierarchies and relationships. Veils are seen again in Anna Ilsley's small, colorful and figurative paintings, as powerful and sexy female forms emerge from behind curtains. Ilsley takes stale cultural representations of women and breaths new life into them.

The female gaze establishes itself in this inspiring group exhibition, which explores just a few of the many sides of its complex subject matter.

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The Viral Sublime
28 November -
16 December 2017



"Body" runs at the Kristin Hjellegjerde gallery until December 21, 2017 at 533 Old York Road, SW18 1TG, London, U.K.

For details, visit: <https://kristinhjellegjerde.com> (<https://kristinhjellegjerde.com/>)

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