

A Splendour Among Shadows Richard Stone and Lorena García Mateu

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Richard Stone, a splendour among shadows, 2020 (porcelain, reinforced clay, paint)

Statuesque horses appear half hidden in thick swathes of colourful fabric while canvases of painted hands reach through backgrounds of vibrant flora. Bringing together the sculptural work of London-based artist Richard Stone and Spanish artist Lorena García

Mateu's paintings, Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery presents *A Splendour Among Shadows*, a timely exploration of sensuality and artistic representation.

The exhibition's title, borrowed from Percy Bysshe Shelley's sonnet *Lift not the painted veil...*, makes reference to the romanticism of both artists' work and their intertextual inspirations as well as the more abstract concept of life emerging from darkness. For both artists here, splendour is tied up with materiality and perspective. 'I really think there is a sensuality to the world that we live in, but that we have moved incredibly far from it,' comments Stone. 'Materiality through sculpture has become a medium for me to reconnect with that sensuality. There is a conscious countering with my approach to fluidity and movement that resists what we often create for ourselves through the flatness of our phone screens. As much as these screens open space out and connect us, they also simultaneously close it and isolate us.'



Richard Stone, lift not the painted veil iii (towards the marine blue sea), 2020 (34.5 x 27.5 x 5 cm)

As such, Stone's works are highly expressive, employing dualities – such as movement and stillness, surrender and resistance, tradition and modernity – to create a palpable

sense of tension and dynamism. This is perhaps most keenly expressed in only from the ruins will you be free, the next evolution of the artist's ongoing marble flag series. Through material transformation and the appearance of time suspended, Stone transcends the nationalistic associations of a flag, allowing us to contemplate the object anew. Similarly, the artist disrupts the traditional symbolism of a horse. In contrast to historic representations of heroism and masculinity, Stone's brass and porcelain horses are softened and partially concealed by abstracted fabric rendered from clay. The illusion of movement combined with a careful use of colour creates narrative intrigue and a haunting sense of fragility that also reveals the artist's critical engagement with his medium. 'Historically, sculpture attempted to enshrine heroic icons of power and conquest in permanence. Yet, as history has shown, that which is believed permanent, becomes questionable or eventually falls into ruin,' says Stone.



Lorena García Mateu, The opportunity, 2020 (Oil on linen, 130 x 97 cm/ 51 1/8 x 38 1/4 in)

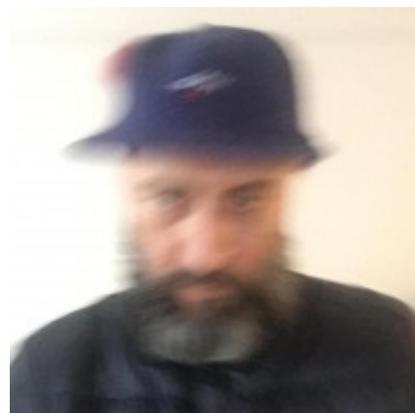
García Mateu similarly interrogates the medium of oil painting through direct engagement with other paintings drawn from art history. Each work features specific hand gestures, which have been taken from a classical painting and transported into a new, surreal context. Emerging from vibrant, luscious backgrounds, the isolated gestures gain a new kind of physicality and significance. 'It's very important for me to

show the mystery and the hidden versus the visible. The static hands are in a background where the organic and the dynamic live together with abstract vegetation,' explains the artist who developed this unique approach after seeing George de La Tour's 1595 painting *El tramposo de los diamantes*. 'I began to notice that there is always a picture inside a picture,' says García Mateu. 'I asked myself what would happen if I dispensed with everything in the image except hands. Would it reveal some specific meaning?' Whilst the viewer is first drawn to the facial expressions of a group of card players in the George de La Tour artwork, *The Opportunity* by García Mateu refocuses our gaze on a single pair of hands which appear almost plant-like as they rise up on a vivid red stem against a sensuous background of blue leaves. Here, as in all of her works, the absence of the body makes space for a language of colour, gesture and emotion.

In some paintings, García Mateu provides visual clues, such as arms and glimpses of clothing. *The Hidden* (inspired by Joaen Friedrich Overbeck's *Italy and German (Sulamita and Maria)*), for example, depicts a moment of intimacy or perhaps, condolence as one person's hands clasps another hand into their lap. The atmosphere of sensuality and warmth is further emphasised through the soft, curved lines of leaves and the harmonious balance of colours. In this way, 'the interpretation of the works is focused toward a more poetic, mysterious and spiritual sense,' says García Mateu, registering another commonality between her and Stone's practices as both artists reach towards transcendence.

Through their complex and rich materialities both these sculptural and painted artworks, invite the viewer to engage in a deeply felt sense of the world that celebrates movement, individuality, texture, ambiguity and romance.

Richard Stone and Lorena García Mateu *A Splendour Among Shadows* 26th of August – 19th of September 2020 Kristin Hjellegjerde Gallery 2 Melior Place, London SE1 3SZ kristinhjellegjerde.com



About Mark Westall

Mark Westall is the Founder and Editor of FAD magazine Founder and co-publisher Art of Conversation and founder of the platform @worldoffad