

Texts; Avery Singer, Bridget Riley, Salman Toor, Dana Schutz, Elizabeth Peyton, Lynette Yiadom-Boakye, Toyin Ojih Odutola, Lina Iris Viktor, Sarah Lucas, Frederick John Eversley, James Capper



Avery Singer
CHINA CHALET (STUDY)
2021, acrylic on paper, 42 1/4 x 89 5/8 inches
107 x 226

Avery Singer's art practice is a unique blend of both historical and

contemporary subject matter, made with both old and new techniques. Her painted works involve a mix of 3D-modeling software, airbrush painting, and her unique use of liquid rubber as a masking material that allows her to remove or fragment parts of the image after it's been painted. China Chalet (Study) is a work on paper connected to a large work on canvas of the same name. Singer describes the work:

That painting is named after a club that I frequented in my twenties. It closed during the pandemic. The painting represents the end of an era of partying downtown. I wanted to memorialize it in a work. You could still smoke inside that club, even though it was banned in regular places. You'd walk in and people would be sitting at tables with white tablecloths, smoking and spilling things on the white fabric, staining them. I wanted an image of a white tablecloth with drugs and alcohol, even human feces on it. [...] The 'White Claw' beverages that are depicted – no one would have ever had them at that club, because it wasn't served there. But now is the time of White Claw. It's what I see everyone drinking. I took the can and I started giving it flavors from Robespierre's time, which I thought would be kind of humorous, to see an 18th-century variety-pack of flavors, flavors you wouldn't encounter today.

Taken as a whole, Singer's tableau reads as a contemporary vanitas painting that plays on romantic notions of drinking, drugs, and a carefree, bohemian lifestyle. And though the imagery is decidedly common, the work itself feels especially poignant in the midst of an era defined by death and a particularly fragile understanding of time. Singer's work is in numerous museum collections, among them the Art Institute of Chicago; Bass Museum, Miami Beach; Boros Collection, Berlin; Carnegie Museum of Art, Pittsburgh; Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin; Hammer Museum, Los Angeles; Hirschhorn Museum, Washington, DC;

Kistefosmuseum, Norway; LACMA, Los Angeles; Minneapolis Institute of Art; MoMA, New York; Museum Ludwig, Cologne; Stedelijk Museum, Amsterdam; Tate Modern, London; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; and the Whitney Museum, New York.



Bridget RILEY (b.1931) (United Kingdom)

Cupid's Quiver (1985)

Ablaze with fiery tones, *Cupid's Quiver* is a vivid large-scale work that demonstrates Bridget Riley's progressive expansion of her iconic 'Egyptian palette'. Executed in 1985, it marks the grand culmination of her celebrated stripe paintings after more than two decades, Riley's Egyptian palette was inspired by a trip to Cairo in the winter of 1979-80, where she observed the rich spectrum of red, blue, yellow, turquoise and green that dominated the tombs of the Pharaohs in the Valley of the Kings. Here, the cool rigour of the Egyptian palette is infused with a newfound sense of sunkissed warmth, gesturing—perhaps—to the amorous implications of the work's title.

Riley had first adopted the stripe as a vehicle for her investigations in the 1960s. As the 1970s progressed, she became increasingly infatuated with curved structures, bending her slim bands of colour into undulating patterns. Her return to the vertical stripe in 1980 coincided with the new inspiration she had found in Egypt: as Paul Moorhouse explains, 'Riley was astonished by the art she found in these ancient burial sites carved out of rock and located deep in the earth. These sacred places were dedicated to the dead, yet the tomb decoration was a vivid evocation of life and light ... As she began to explore this new, so-called "Egyptian palette", it was clear that radical structural changes to her work would be required.

While in Egypt, Riley had been fascinated by the ways in which the colours of the tombs seemed to infiltrate the very fabric of everyday life: from decorative arts to utilitarian objects. Working from memory back in her London studio, her investigations took on new meaning. She was no longer dealing with the mechanics of perception in an abstract sense, but rather engaging with a real visual experience that—like Cupid's own arrow—had left a lasting impression upon her eye and mind. This new sensory

awareness arguably reached a crescendo in works such as the present: the organisation of colours is more free, supple and sensuous than ever before, illuminated as if by some ancient source. Light ripples fluidly across the surface, diving in and out of the shadows like rays of sun filtering through an underground cavern.



Salman TOOR (1983) (Pakistan)

Rooftop Party with Ghosts 3 (2015)

Come let us go to a place where all are blind. Where no one is ahead and no one is behind.”

(B. Shah, paraphrased by S.

Toor, quoted in B. Vasvani, “Painting the Imagined Space Where East and West Harmonize”, *Hyperallergic*, 30 November 2015)

All walks of life convene tonight on this city terrace, as Salman Toor’s *Rooftop Party with Ghosts 3 (2015)* celebrates myriad elements of diversity across time and space in his signature calligraphic style. Men and women mix and mingle with leisure on their minds, foregrounded by a couple on the precipice of intimacy juxtaposed with another pair somewhat deeper into their amorous throes just behind. Rendered in various stages of completion, Toor’s figures pulse in and out of reality, some engaged solely with one another, firmly entrenched in the picture plane and others peering out beyond the fourth wall to make contact with the viewer. In the midst of the melee, a lonesome, spectral sojourner suddenly finds himself surveying this unfamiliar urban festival, haunted by a blank thought bubble waiting to be filled. Tossed into a contemporary morass of identity politics and distorted relationships, Toor’s traveler must do his own internal work of reconciliation between the distant land from where he has come and this novel, messy milieu. Headlining the telling scene is an excerpt from the seventeenth-century Sufi poet Bulleh Shah’s writings written in Urdu and loosely

translated as:

O’ Bulleh Shah let’s go there

Where everyone is blind

Where no one recognizes our caste (or race, or family name)
And where no one believes in us

Where, in Toor's updated context, is Shah's "there"? Where must Toor's characters go to step outside the stereotypical boxes into which society has inevitably cast them? In the same way the visiting apparition has confronted a segregation unique to the caste system practiced in his native home, so too must Toor's modern young people undertake a journey of their own to challenge the confines of their imposed roles and reach their truest selves.

These cross-cultural musings are central to Toor's practice, which has evolved from intense study of the Old Masters and French Rococo into an autobiographical catalogue of contemporary queer life. Born in Lahore, Pakistan, educated in the midwestern United States and now settled in Brooklyn, New York, Toor has long sought to expose and interrogate the brewing tensions between East and West, crafting a new visual language sung by the voices of the oppressed: "I like for the characters in my painting to move between vulnerability and empowerment. I like foolish, marionette-like figures that evoke empathy as immigrants crossing borders, but they also have agency and dignity: things that have not been traditionally associated with our faces and bodies in painting" (S. Toor, quoted in N. Gupta, "Pakistani-origin, New York-based artist Salman Toor wants to paint a world where the East and West harmonise", *GQ India*, 12 March 2020). Toor's dignified, lyrical bodies will be front and center in his solo exhibition *How Will I Know* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, rescheduled from early 2020 to remain open now through April 2021, and which has already received critical acclaim.

A painter's painter descended from the line of art history and deposited into today's divisive cultural moment, Toor constructs his imagined, thoughtful narratives towards an architecture of hope – that out of this darkness will emerge unified bodies bursting with light. "For Toor, these 'ghosts' serve as reverberating echoes of origins, 'cultural baggage', as well as enablers of disruption and reinvention of static ideas of self and belonging" ("Foreword", in *Salman Toor: Resident Alien*, exh. cat., New York, Aicon Gallery, 2015, p. 4). As much a commentary on intercultural interaction as it is an invitation to participate, the present work reaches out a stylized, elegant hand to guide its newfound guest out of this gathering of strangers and specters and into a harmonized future where the view from the rooftop is of a city aglow.

Dana SCHUTZ (b.1976) USA

Born in 1976, Schutz came to prominence in the early 2000s for her dark humour, allusions to art history and provocative subject matter. Known for her “inventive and muscular way of shaping space on canvas to build what her friend, the painter Cecily Brown, called ‘bulletproof constructions’”

The resulting concoction is utterly engrossing even as it perplexes or even repels, rendering the deep anxieties of contemporary life with searing high-speed bravura. Peter Schjeldahl observes: “Though her style can suggest Expressionism, it is detached from mere personal emotion. She objectifies anxious states of mind – or of soul” (Peter Schjeldahl, “Dana Schutz”, *The New Yorker*, online). Schjeldahl also writes: “Schutz creates allegories of uncertain but torrid, gnashing implication, a bit like the enigmatic narratives of the German modern master Max Beckmann, but less solemn. She does this with almost preposterously extraordinary gifts for composition, paint handling, and, in particular, color, suffusing clashes of hue and tone with ghostly essences of a chromatic unity that you feel rather than quite see” (*Ibid*)



Lion Eating Its Tamer In equal parts macabre, comical, and psychologically complex, Dana Schutz’s magnificent *Lion Eating Its Tamer* combats raw visceral figuration with fractured geometric abstraction, epitomizing the artist’s acclaimed comic-grotesque vision. The almost biblical imagery in the present work functions perhaps as an allegory of painting: “A lion, his gigantic head typical of a Schutz protagonist, is shown defeating his tamer. Emerging from what looks like a canvas depicted within the work, the lion’s brush-like tail bears traces of green and purple paint. The lion is of course Painting itself, intent on devouring the helpless painter” (Jeff Frederick, “Dana Schutz”, *Art in America*, 30 October 2015). The work was painted in 2015, a period when Schutz often conceived of figures trapped in enclosed spaces or environs such as elevators. While these works function as metaphors for the struggle of human

life within constrictions or challenges, *Lion Eating Its Tamer* seems to allude specifically to the painter battling with his craft in the arena of the canvas.

The ravaged pictorial space is nevertheless radiant, luminous in a chromatic unity anchored by Schutz's signature gradated golds. In contrast to Max Beckmann's docile crouching lion in *Lion Tamer, Circus*, Schutz's glorious beast emerges victorious: art has triumphed, and so has its heroic painter.

Schjeldahl's reference to Max Beckmann is particularly apt in relation to the present work, which recalls the German modern master's *Lion Tamer, Circus* in both subject matter and palette. In contrast to the tamer's defiant combative stance in Beckmann's painting, Schutz's tamer folds his body into the mouth of his beast, succumbing gracefully, almost in a state of divine ecstasy. Adorned with an elegantly trailing whip and ethereal ring of fire, the beautifully harrowing scene presents a riveting and visceral narrative about constricting pressures or confining environments, a prevalent and powerful theme in Schutz's works in that period. Perfectly capturing the simultaneous moments of triumph and sweet surrender, *Lion Eating Its Tamer* revels in its potent embodiment of the physical sensations of both beast and man, offering a psychologically complex and enigmatic tableau that evokes endless associations and interpretations.



Elizabeth PEYTON (1965) USA
"Prince Harry (with Flowers)" (1997)

"[Elizabeth Peyton] painted Prince Harry repeatedly in 1997, the year that Princess Diana died. The motherless prince typically appears alone, a little-boy-lost look in his eye...

What Peyton does here, and what she does

best, is to record the transfiguring pressure of private life on public faces."

Painted in 1997, *Prince Harry* is one of the most poignant and emotionally invested portraits in Elizabeth Peyton's oeuvre. Painted in December 1997 – the same year as Princess Diana's tragic death – it reveals the personal emotions of a very public figure, a young boy grappling with the loss of his mother under the intense scrutiny of the world's press. Like Andy Warhol's images of Jackie Kennedy after the assassination of JFK in *The Week That Was*, 1963, Peyton's painting takes as its point of departure an image in the public domain, a photograph of the young prince laying flowers left in tribute to Princess Diana.

The original source image, however, is merely a jumping-off point for Peyton. In contrast to Warhol's silkscreen process which replicates the impersonal mechanics of the printing press in such a way that the viewer becomes desensitized to Jackie's personal tragedy, here Peyton's delicate, deceptively spontaneous brushstrokes heighten emotional intensity, bringing the viewer into communion with her subjects. Though painted from a paparazzi photo, Peyton's work reverberates with all the emotional energy of a candid family snapshot. Her depiction bypasses the aura surrounding his fame and public life, tapping into his personal history to create a portrait which is devoid of the voyeurism and the intrusive gaze of the media. Peyton herself has commented that what she is drawn to in her subjects is "that particular moment, when they're about to become what they'll become" (Elizabeth Peyton cited in: David Lock, 'Live Forever' in *A&M*, Issue 6, Summer 2009). Peyton's *Prince Harry* narrates a watershed event in the history of our generation's Royal Family, a moment at which, owing to great personal tragedy, a young boy was forced to grow up.

By taking her source photograph from the shared repertoire of our image-saturated culture, Peyton lends a certain familiarity and intimacy to the work which the viewer can share. Even if we do not recognise the specific source, we *feel* as though we do, as though this moment somehow shares in our own nostalgic personal histories.

Painting without hegemony, both her close friends and figures in the public eye, there is a democratisation at play in Peyton's technique that recalls Warhol's programme to rescue portraiture from its elitist past. Blurring social boundaries, Peyton's oeuvre presents a parallel aristocracy equally worthy of depiction, which responds in an

intensely personal way to individuals whose lives and actions she deems heroic, noble and inspirational.

The motherless prince typically appears alone, a little-boy-lost look in his eye... What Peyton does here, and what she does best, is to record the transfiguring pressure of private life on public faces

Typically, Peyton prefers the intimate, off-duty moments where the true personality behind the mask might be glimpsed.

The brilliant luminosity and translucency of her style transforms an artless media image into an intimate and personal icon which throws into relief the way in which Peyton has drawn upon the history of devotional portraiture in her treatment of her unambiguously contemporary subject matter.



Lynette Yiadom-Boakye (b. 1987)
***The Like Above All Lovers* (2013) USA**

Unveiled as part of Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's 2013 Turner Prize exhibition in Derry~Londonderry, Northern Ireland, *The Like Above All Lovers* is a landmark work from a pivotal moment in her practice. From billowing swathes of deep green, a lone, armed figure emerges, their gun pointing silently at some unknown target in the distance. Loose, feathered strokes of paint chart ripples through the grass, while layers of rich impasto capture the play of light across the figure's body; the entire scene is infused with cinematic suspense. Yiadom-Boakye's characters are born from her imagination, where painting, literature and music intermingle freely. Drawing upon multiple sources of inspiration, her paintings are less portraits of individuals than essays in paint's capacity to evoke narrative, emotion and tension. The Turner Prize exhibition—its first staging outside England—was a triumph, elevating Yiadom-Boakye to international acclaim. Works from the show were subsequently acquired by institutions including the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (*Appreciation of the Inches*, 2013) and Tate, London (*The Generosity*, 2010), where the artist is currently staging her largest solo exhibition to date.

A writer as well as a painter, Yiadom-Boakye presents fragmentary moments from undisclosed tales. 'I write about the things I can't paint', she says, 'and paint the things I can't write about': the two modes of expression are, for her, intimately connected. While many of her titles—such as the present—seem to harbour literary implications, they reveal almost nothing about the characters and scenes depicted. Instead, explains the artist, they function as 'an extra mark in the paintings'—another layer of texture that colours the viewer's encounter with the work (L. Yiadom-Boakye, quoted in Z. Smith,

'Lynette Yiadom-Boakye's Imaginary Portraits', *The New Yorker*, 12 June 2017). Born of her own photographs and scrapbook images, as well as scenes from art history, her paintings slip seamlessly between reality and fiction, figuration and abstraction. Here, echoes of Goya, Bacon and others resound momentarily, before retreating back into the shadows. An eerie stillness hangs heavily in the air—the impending explosion is almost audible.

Despite depicting exclusively black subjects, Yiadom-Boakye maintains that her works are not intended as explicit political statements. Instead, the ethnicity of her characters reflects the fact that they are very much bound up with her own thoughts—they are products of her mind and hand. At the same time, her works mark an important milestone in painterly representations of black figures, suggesting subtle retellings of history through their knowing references to the Western canon. Ultimately, however, works such as the present find their meaning in their celebration of paint's humanising power: its fluid, mercurial properties that—like words themselves—coalesce into stories. Who the characters are, or what acts they are about to perform, is less interesting to the artist than the way that such suggestions are borne out through paint. In the present work, it is in the agitated flick of the brush, the blinding glimmer of white and the thick paste of the leaden sky that lend the scene its inscrutable drama. What happens next is left to the viewer to decide.



**Toyin Ojih
ODUTOLA
(b.1985) USA
LTS IV (2014)**

Love is lak de sea.
It's uh movin' thing, but still and all,
it takes its shape from de shore it meets,
and it's different with every shore.
—Zora Neale Hurston, 1937

In *LTS IV*, a young male figure is portrayed lounging against an abstract, green-patterned background, his arm outstretched behind his neck and his eyes dozing in peaceful rest. The man is one of Odutola's younger brothers,

captured as part of the Nigerian-born artist's *Like The Seaseries* which, initially displayed at the Jack Shainman Gallery, New York, in 2014, took its name from an aphorism opening Zora Neale Hurston's 1937 novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. With its precise, blade-like lines and its deep, dreamlike colours, *LTS IV* typifies the immersive style for which Oduola has become known for. Recognised by many as one of the most promising artists of her generation, Oduola was the first Black woman to be bestowed a show at *The Curve* at the Barbican Centre in London in 2020 — an event that closely followed another moment of prestige in her career, as the artist saw her first solo exhibition take place at the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, in 2017. Focusing her portraiture on family members and those that surround her, Oduola expands 'not only the definition of blackness, but [also] what blackness can contain, what blackness can reveal, and where it can go'.¹ An exquisite example of this practice, *LTS IV* conveys an ethereally poetic portrait that is as much grounded in reality as it extends beyond the arbitrary boundaries of life.

Family-Driven Narratives

Evincing the lifelike silhouette of Oduola's brother with palpable intimacy, *LTS IV* beautifully demonstrates the importance of the artist's family as a subject matter in her oeuvre. Capturing the timelapse before or after an action — here, following a lengthy photoshoot that the artist admitted left both of her brothers exhausted, resulting in several portraits of them sleeping — *LTS IV* shows Oduola's brother lounging serenely against what appears to be a traditional Nigerian tapestry, his gaze cast outward, and the presence of his sister, the painter, palpable in emotional involvement. With its intimate edge, and its invitation into the character's personal space as he unwinds from tireless activity, the image explores the vivid, sublime permutations of leisure in portraiture, as well as 'the malleability of identity, meaning and power through portraiture and story-telling' — Oduola's self-described artistic mission.²

'It was important for me to have them just be, to look like they weren't changing themselves for anyone—not even me.' —Toyin Ojih Oduola

Through her distinctively stylised portraits, Odotola addresses themes of identity, uncertainty and belonging, crafting a story that takes its conceptual footing from reality, before being propelled in an embellished realm of figuration. Relocating from Ife, Nigeria to the United States when she was five years old — first to California and subsequently to Alabama — the artist has, over the course of her artistic practice, transcribed a sense of displacement in her work that has continually echoed her real-life experiences. ‘My family and I have constantly been affected by the places we have lived and in so doing have adjusted ourselves to every context’, Odotola said. ‘It’s something I have carried with me into adulthood—this application of compromising oneself to fit my surroundings—and my brothers as well’.³ As her peripatetic upbringing seeped through her painterly style — which itself seems jagged, as though perpetually in movement — Odotola very quickly adopted drawing as a medium of choice, facilitating her desire to convey layers, tensions, and quasi-cartographic specificity in skin. ‘The act of drawing for me is a cultivating act’, the artist has said. ‘Each drawing I create is my way of crafting a home for myself’.⁴

Drawing Portraits

‘The skin in the drawings I create was initially an investigation into what skin felt like, to live in that space and the way that affects how the skin is defined, how it is read, how it creates parameters for movement and possibility.’ —Toyin Ojih Odotola

Indeed, Odotola’s approach to portraiture is not only exceptional in the sense of proximity it conveys, but also in the artist’s medium of choice — the two being, in a discreet way, interconnected. Odotola’s decision to employ charcoal, pastel and marker pen to render her vibrant depictions challenges the tradition of the painted portrait, and her masterful draughtsmanship is brilliantly exemplified by the present work. Here, the varying environments which the artist experienced growing up seem to be translated through the broken marks that she engraves in her drawing, imprinting intricately detailed forms onto the surface of her subject matter as if they were the

meandering lines of a thumbprint. The treatment of the flesh in particular is striking, showing quick movements of black and white that together conjure a kind of magical luminescence. This technique of abstracted figuration enabled by drawing fosters a new approach to the treatment of Black skin in particular, allowing for a discreet figurative materialisation of Odotola's torn identity. The way in which the artist draws the patterns of surrounding fabric — a reference to the family's collective origin and their own interwoven narrative with place and space — furthermore flattens the composition, echoing windblown foliage and imbuing the work with the rhythmic quality of a landscape.



Lina Iris VIKTOR
(1987) DARK CONTINENT SE
VI — FOR WHAT GIVES LIGHT
MUST ENDURE BURNING.
AMOR FATI. (2021) U.K, I
don't want to control the
experience, but I do want
to couch the experience.
Architecture has the ability
to create channels of
energy that allow you to
focus your view on
different things.' —Lina
Iris Viktor

Born in 1987 in the United Kingdom to Liberian parents, Viktor culls inspiration from various time periods and geographies. Mining through past, present, and future, she merges visual references into a single cyclical continuum, yielding unique visual experiences which, in her own words, convey 'the oneness of things'.¹ The result of this comprehensive perspective is an oeuvre that combines the figurative with the abstract; mathematics with mysticism; rich, multivalent black tones with shimmering, luminescent hues of gold and blue — what Viktor calls 'lightworks'.² Though they are distributed in series speaking to notions of time, space, and the cosmos, each of Viktor's works feels like a slightly different angle to a singular point of view.

Cosmic Beauty

'I want to create a visual language, or narrative, that unifies all these different symbols, and find a way to weave a visual tale that is not a literal language but that is felt far more intuitively.' —Lina Iris Viktor

Inspired by contemporary and ancient art forms alike, spanning the oeuvres of the West African photographer Seydou Keïta, the 15th-century French illuminator and miniaturist Jean Fouquet, and the British painter David Hockney, Viktor absorbs all the beauty and creativity that surrounds her, and fuses it into a distinct visual realm. Bringing her own edge to this artistic intention, Viktor imparts her creations with a conceptual edge. She finishes her compositions with complex articulations of pattern that resemble glistening portals of gold-leaf code; subsequently, she places resin or lacquer in specific areas of the surface to conjure ‘different lusters of black’.³

Black and Gold

'The way we think about darkness, it's ominous. What does it mean for Black people to be aligned with this idea? And can you make it beautiful and arresting?'

—Lina Iris Viktor

Gold has been a central element to Viktor's artistic practice since the outset of her career. Yet, transcending its presence as mere material in her compositions, the metal becomes a subject matter in its own right. As Viktor is interested in the ‘otherworldliness’ of gold— and the way it has been perceived across African, Southeast Asian, and South American cultures—she endows it with a spiritual value that is redolent of Yves Klein's gold divinations, investigating the material's mystical properties. She furthermore perceives an animated, lifelike connection between the shimmering metal and the colour black — and consequently, between the ‘idea’ of gold and the ‘idea’ of blackness. Balking against the conception that the latter should represent an absence or a deficiency, she instead argues that it is a building block: ‘It is what gold and precious materials are mined from.’ It is in the midst of obscurity and blackness, she adds, that ‘stars and planets are born’.⁴ *Constellations III*, with its sumptuous chromatic subtleties diving into the possibilities of black and gold, shows the power and self-sufficiency that exists in the two cosmic chromes, shining with irrepressible fervour like a deep night's sky.

Lina Iris Viktor in Conversation

In this 2019 interview, Lina Iris Viktor walks the reader through her artistic process, her inspirations, and her desire to shed light on the infinite potential for beauty in the colour black.

Edwina Hagon: What ideas or themes do you explore through your practice?

Lina Iris Viktor: My work is about a lot of things. It's partially about trying to make sense of a lot of the cosmologies and symbols and symbologies that have been part of our DNA as human beings, not even about myself as an African, but as human beings since the beginning of time. So, I look at a lot of ancient cultures like the Egyptians, the Nubians, different empires that existed across the continent from the Congo to what is now Nigeria. I also look at the Dogon and Mali cultures and the symbologies of the Aboriginal people in Australia, a lot of South American, Native American cultures and how they depict their understanding of the world around them. These symbols are very universal; but for me, I want to create a visual language, or narrative, that unifies all these different symbols, and find a way to weave a visual tale that is not a literal language but that is felt far more intuitively.

I like to explore the ideas of universal implications of blackness, which has a trickle-down effect on the more sociological and racial ideas of blackness. When you think about the universe around us, it appears to be Black, it appears to be a void. Our modern society has always had very negative connotations associated with blackness, and I'm talking about that in the universal sense. So, when you look in Webster's Dictionary, you see the associations and the synonyms attributed to blackness, and they're all pretty negative. And so I almost want to create these works that are so visually stimulating—you can call them beautiful or aesthetically pleasing or attractive, but at least stimulating—so we can renegotiate these ideas around the universal implications of how we define blackness.

EH: Color plays a significant role in your practice, in particular blue, black, white, and 24-karat gold. Could you tell us about the motivation behind this purist color palette?

LIV: It was very intuitive. It wasn't something I actively premeditated on. I've mentioned a lot already that I've always been drawn to the aesthetic language of cultures like the Egyptians and the Nubians, and if you look at the color palettes they use, it's those colors: black and gold, and lapis—what people call Yves Klein Blue. To me, these colors signify power. And when we look back to that era and time and you see the artifacts remaining, what we see in museums—they're wholly powerful, they stand the test of time, they're immortal, and so I wanted to imbue the work with that energy.



Sarah Lucas,
DICK 'EAD, 2018,
172x78x116 cm
bronze, concrete,
cast iron, Ed 4/6
+2 ap

Sarah LUCAS (1962)

DICK 'EAD (2020) U.K

The artist's sixth solo exhibition with the gallery encompasses a new group of soft sculptures from her ongoing body of Bunnies as well as a work in bronze from the same series.

The first Bunnies were created as early as 1997 and are becoming increasingly timeless. The new, anthropomorphic figures made out of stuffed pantyhose reclining on chairs are a perpetuation of Lucas' recognisable visual language bordering on the surreal. Deploying highly gender-coded found objects such as high heels and nylon stockings, Lucas inflates the notion of female objectification to its apex, only to invert it with an ungainly, exaggerated pose. Reminiscent of the reclining female nude, Lucas' thin figures with globular breast comically sprawl their elongated limbs in all directions, seeming at once aggressive and fragile, concurrently self-confident and vulnerable, caught in an awkward moment. While her early Bunnies were made in plain flesh tones, this new generation has acquired brightly coloured socks and fashionista shoes.

Cast from soft sculptures in stuffed nylon, the new bronze sculpture mirrors its pulpy counterparts in its form as on its surface. DICK 'EAD is a figure blatantly showing off her both male and female attributes, positioned on a vintage barber's chair out of steel and concrete. Much like her stilettoed companions in soft flesh, her open, laid-back pose in polished bronze simultaneously radiates a vulgar hypermasculinity and a seductive vulnerability. The effect is the one of blurring lines between humour and abjection, all the while it thrives on a tension between hard and soft, creating a material clash. ANGEL, the plaster bust with which Lucas erected a monument to her artist friend Angela Bulloch in 2017, seems to be enthroned or suspended above reconciling the parties.

The exhibition gathers Lucas' new and older sculptures which tirelessly challenge gender stereotypes and confront the viewer with investigations of sexuality and identity in a playful and ironic way.



Frederick John EVERSLEY (1941) USA

LOS ANGELES — Fred Eversley has been making art for more than 50 years. *Recent Sculpture* at David Kordansky Gallery is by no means a survey — its 15 sculptures all date from 2018 to 2020 and focus primarily on the form that has most occupied him over the years, the parabolic lens. But the

exhibition's concentration allows the breathtaking effects of his work to come through all the better.

A pioneering figure in California's Light and Space movement, Eversley left a career in aerospace engineering for art; he moved to Southern California to work at Wyle Laboratories, where he designed and constructed testing facilities for NASA. As a result, he brought to his art practice technical expertise as well as a rigorous scientific grasp of energy.

The works in *Recent Sculpture* — 10 parabolic lenses and five horizontal lenses that resemble shallow bowls — continue the artist's longtime fascination with the parabola and its optical and acoustical properties. He uses a centrifuge to create his translucent forms and achieves their luminous surfaces through repeated sanding and polishing.

The results are mesmerizing. The works seem at once organic and synthetic, material and immaterial in the way they change with the vicissitudes of light, seeming, at times, to exist wholly through reflections. The crystalline sheen makes the hardened polyester look as if it is suspended between liquid and solid states. Eversley has expanded his palette from his original magenta, yellow, and cyan, with some works composed of two or three gradated colors. In "Untitled (parabolic lens)" ([1969] 2020), the colors radiate out in concentric circles, from white at the center to light blue, green, indigo, and black, with some variation depending on the light. From certain angles red or yellow hues flicker in and out. The soft gray at the center of a black lens suggests the moon shrouded by fog and darkness.

The exhibition's layout enhances the kaleidoscopic effects. The five horizontal lenses sit on a central table bookended by the parabolic lenses, which are displayed at varying angles on two long platforms; from almost any angle, the center of a lens captures the distorted images of the sculptures it faces, refracted onto its concave interior walls.

Some sculptures captured by the lens appear to float in space; looking through the deep royal blue of one work feels like staring into the cosmos or an oceanic abyss. The convex forms of the horizontal lenses create the opposite effect, saturated with color at the center and radiating a halo of light around the edges, like a solar eclipse.

In contrast to the work of many of his Light and Space and Minimalist contemporaries, Eversley's sculptures are relatively small. The parabolic lenses are under 20 inches in diameter and around six inches deep, and the horizontal lenses are just slightly larger in diameter.

Because of their intimate size, they neither tower over us, like John McCracken's monoliths or Larry Bell's tinted glass walls, for example, nor immerse us, like James Turrell's light installations, but rather draw us into a self-aware and ever-shifting encounter with space and perceptual phenomena. Eversley has called his work "kinetic art" in the sense that it prompts us to move, but the label doesn't capture the joy of the experience.

Eversley's virtuosity is matched by an understated wit. The correspondence between the parabolic lens and the eye can conjure associations with surveillance or panopticism, underscored by the layering of our own reflections with the distorted views and reflections of others.

Likewise, their associations with science, technology, and space travel evoke dystopic science fiction (or reality) at times: A ruby red lens viewed head-on almost recalls HAL 9000, the sentient computer in Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and Eversley's centrifuge is fashioned from a turntable once used to making atomic bomb casings. (Critic Claire Barliant notes in a *Bomb* magazine review the rebelliousness of rerouting doomsday technology toward art.)

Yet *Recent Sculpture* makes a strong case for Light and Space, and Eversley's elegant, jewel-like sculptures, as especially welcome, essential even, in times of unrest. His artworks provide a space for curiosity and play. They embody "Light and Space" by creating an atmosphere of lightness unencumbered by our worldly realm.



JAMES CAPPER: HYDRA PAINTER & THE ROTARY PAINTINGS OF 2020 (II) U.K

When the first lockdown set in, James Capper, a London-born sculptor and artist, was working on a large steel installation along the River Thames. The shipping yard closed, his project was halted, and Capper returned to his studio, which is itself in a shipping container. It was stuffed with the flotsam of research and abandoned pieces, among them a hydra painter Capper engineered in 2015 and had forgotten about. The machine works a bit like a turntable, but here it's the tone arm—with paint roller attached—that spins, leaving circles of color on a paper fixed beneath. Capper produced orbits of deftly composed color with glowing white centers, minimalist images that targeted the sameness, the endless round, of days during lockdown. In 2021, Capper made a new, bigger hydra painter and began producing another series of daily paintings, these ones given titles taken from newspaper headlines and government briefings. In a sense, they're "records" of life these days. —C.J.F.