

Ladies' Paradise

Grace Belgravia, 11C West Halkin Street, Belgravia, London SW1X 8JL

22 February – 8 April 2018 [time: 9am-7pm every day]

Preview: Wednesday 21 February, 6-9pm

Organised by Open Space Contemporary & Everything I Want

Curated by Huma Kabakçı & Nadja Romain

Open Space Contemporary and Everything I Want are delighted to present an all women exhibition titled *Ladies' Paradise*, which takes place at Grace Belgravia with emerging artists Merve İşeri, Sofia Stevi, Clementine Keith-Roach and Güneş Terkol.

Set at Grace Belgravia, a spa and medical centre for women, the site-specific exhibition will explore the notion of the body, internal desires, the role of the female and abstraction through different media such as ceramics by Clementine Keith-Roach, canvas paintings by Merve İşeri, drawings by Sofia Stevi and sewn textiles by Güneş Terkol. Through variations of material, medium, texture and techniques, each of the four artists' practices and works overlap through intimacy and form.

The title of the exhibition *Ladies' Paradise* is inspired by Émile Zola's eleventh novel in the Rougon Macquart series titled *Au Bonheur des Dames*, which takes place in a department store in the mid- 19th century. The modernisation of the store and the different roles of women in the book are intertwined with the structure of the exhibition, which focuses on femininity, the body, differing levels of society, gender and identity politics.

In her work **Merve İşeri** paints directly from the tube, both in acrylic and oil, using pastels and her fingers to work on the cotton she has dyed. In her symbolic, abstract paintings, İşeri aims to develop personal conversations with the viewer. In the same vein, **Sofia Stevi** merges two opposites in her work; living and dreaming. Her large scale paintings on untreated cotton fabric convey a simultaneous sense of passively observing and actively experiencing different spaces. **Clementine Keith-Roach's** artistic style comes from her interest in museums, interiors, souvenirs and ancient objects of the history of form and texture which all have a presence in her sensuous ceramics. She exhumes typologies of art long abandoned, here taking the Cycladic nipple vase and reconceptualising it as an imprint of her own and other women's bodies. **Güneş Terkol** takes inspiration from her immediate surroundings, collecting materials and stories, which she weaves into her sewing pieces, videos, sketches and musical compositions both collectively and individually.

The four female artists are not only inspired by their surroundings, but also by their inner world as they explore the notion of belonging, identity linked to a place and the politics of the body. *Ladies' Paradise* merges form, abstraction and figuration in response to Grace Belgravia's classic architecture and slightly location.

The curators say:

"I am thrilled to be starting 2018 with this exciting collaborative co-curated exhibition. Nadja Romain and I have been in conversation for a while on how we can work together. Developing Ladies' Paradise and working with four exceptional artists has been a great way to pursue our conversations into feminist theory and site specificity. Since its foundation in 2014, Open Space Contemporary has been promoting cross-cultural dialogue between artists, curators and art practitioners in London and Istanbul through a nomadic nature." – Huma Kabakci

"Having been involved in furthering women's empowerment for many years, it is exciting to engage in a dialogue with Huma and this group of young female talents. As a member of Grace Belgravia I am thrilled by the opportunity to open this conversation on the female body in a place where women come to improve their body, health and appearance. It's a unique opportunity to discuss one of the main topics in our society: the display of the female body and the symbolism that surrounds it." – Nadja Romain

Notes to editors:

Merve İşeri (b.1992, Istanbul) is a painter working mostly with oils on unprimed canvas. She graduated from Politecnico di Milano, Communication Design in 2014, and since then has been living between London and İstanbul. İşeri has shown works since 2015 in group shows in Chicago, Milan, Istanbul and London, and recently had her first solo exhibition with Ballon Rouge in Istanbul in September, 2017. İşeri's intent is directed and symbolic, albeit opposed to assigned meaning.

Sofia Stevi (b. 1982, Athens) graduated from Central Saint Martins in London. Her practice is based on paintings but also includes sculptures, installations and books. She has co-founded the artist-run space Fokidos in 2013, where she continues to curate and host exhibitions, happenings and residencies. Stevi merges in her work two opposites: living and dreaming. Her large scale paintings on untreated cotton fabric convey a simultaneous sense of passively observing and actively experiences different spaces. Stevi's solo exhibition "turning forty winks into a decade" is currently on view at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art in Gateshead, UK until 22 April 2018. Sofia Stevi is represented by The Breeder.

Clementine Keith-Roach (b. 1984, London) is a sculptor and set designer. She studied Art History at Bristol University before beginning work in set design. Her sculptures intersect these two disciplines, overlaying objects of use with purely aesthetic dimensions. Up until recently her sculptures have been given over to her sets, woven into narratives, and altered to suit their environment, but in the last year she has begun to show her work in a gallery context - isolating their form and entering them into a new critical landscape. Her work has been shown recently in Athens and London and is currently showing in a group exhibition at LA MoCA.

Güneş Terkol (b.1981, Istanbul) is an artist based in Istanbul. She graduated from Mimar Sinan University, Fine Art Faculty, Painting Department, and completed a MA degree at the Yıldız Teknik University Interdisciplinary Art Department. Terkol takes inspiration from her immediate surroundings, collecting materials and stories, which she weaves into her sewing pieces, videos, sketches and musical compositions. The act of sewing and using recycled fabrics - in itself, an act of resistance- reclaims to a form of independent production and widens access to contemporary art. Terkol's textile works such as Home Is My Heart banner was presented at Art Night on 1 July 2017, depicting women adapting or refusing to adapt to the social and cultural transformations that affect contemporary Turkey but also to further local contexts internationally.

Open Space Contemporary is an itinerant contemporary art platform that promotes cross-cultural dialogue and multidisciplinary exchange through international projects with artists, curators and other practitioners. It responds to the site-specific qualities of different spaces, and its projects range from exhibitions to performances, talks, symposia, screenings and publications. Open Space Contemporary is also an ideological space that accommodates the needs of different practices and media, with the aim of advancing artistic and curatorial discourse through collaboration. Founded by Huma Kabakçı in 2014, Open Space Contemporary exists primarily between London and Istanbul.

Huma Kabakçı previously worked in various galleries, museums and auction houses, both in the UK and Turkey, including Sotheby's New Bond Street (Contemporary Art Sales department), The Albion Gallery (London), Pera Museum (Turkey), as well as three major collection exhibitions she worked on in museums during the 2010 Ruhr & Pecs Capital of Culture project. Kabakçı founded Open Space Contemporary and has been collaborating with various projects and organisations including Alt, Artkurio, Block Universe, IKSU, Open Dialogue Istanbul, The Art Department and SALT. Kabakçı's curatorial practice focuses on and examines diaspora, memory, gender identity and belonging. She currently lives and works between Istanbul and London.

Everything I Want was founded as a venture to allow activities ranging from curating to production, reflecting Nadja Romain's interest in creativity through many forms. Working with a wide range of visual artists, designers and creatives across the globe, Everything I Want allows the artists to grow and develop their practice whilst insuring their work is placed within notable international collections. Collaborations include Ron Arad, Ilya and Emilia Kabakov, Shezad Dawood, Mariko Mori, Beatriz and Marcia Milhaezes to name but a few. The venture operates as a research laboratory and production factory to develop ideas and concepts, produce projects and objects with a practice in the fields of visual arts, performing arts, fashion and design. By applying a holistic approach to the projects, the aim is to entertain, educate and challenge preconceptions to engage partners and audience in meaningful experiences and to go beyond the white cube and traditional way of looking at things.

Nadja Romain has vast experience in art, media, luxury and lifestyle working with artists such as Ron Arad, Emilia and Ilya Kabakov, Chila Kumari Burman and Maria Marshall. Receiving MAs from both La Sorbonne and École du Louvre. Her credits as a producer include films Mister Lonely by Harmony Korine , documentaries No Restraint: A portrait of Matthew Barney, By the Ways a Journey with William Eggleston, Film installations Zidane by Doug-las Gordon and Philippe Parreno, Ten Thousand Waves by Isaac Julien. Since 2010, Romain has devoted time to supporting human rights organisations that address women’s rights and empowerment, as well as children’s education and protection. Nadja sits on the International Advisory Board of Women for Women International. Romain’s ambition to foster collaboration between artists and human rights organisations in order to develop a discourse of awareness and lasting change has sparked the launch of her most recent initiative Art, Action, Change.

Grace Belgravia is one of London’s leading health, wellbeing and lifestyle clubs for women, built on the philosophy that to thrive in today’s busy world we need to invest in our greatest asset: our health. Grace provides a sanctuary where women can prioritise their well-being and recalibrate. Creating the blueprint for true health, the club is led by internationally recognised medical experts and therapists.