

PIPPY HOULDSWORTH GALLERY

LI HEI DI

700 Nights of Winter

15 March - 20 April 2024

Private View | Thursday 14 March 2024 | 6-8 pm



Li Hei Di, *Soar on the Thermal Current*, 2024
oil on linen, 120 x 170 cm, 47 x 67 in

Pippy Houldsworth Gallery is pleased to present Chinese-born, London-based artist Li Hei Di's first solo exhibition in the UK, *700 Nights of Winter*. In new paintings, Li explores primal, sexual urges with her signature fluid application of paint. Balanced on a knife edge between abstraction and representation, her paintings feature figures that swim in and out of view beneath diaphanous veils of paint; each layer offers a different world, or a portal to an altered oneiric space, guided by desire and emotion. Multiple perspectives collide and overlap, creating dynamic compositions that offer manifold realities within a single work. Luminescent orbs appear as though submerged in deep water, giving her compositions a nebulous quality.

Li's multidisciplinary practice is concerned with repressed desire, rooted in her own experience of navigating hetero-normative environments that obstruct open expressions of queerness. Her work eschews rigid sexual codes and gender categories in favour of a liberated approach to fantasy and beauty, which exists apart from hierarchical and dominant social structures. For Li, the dichotomous relationship between sexual arousal and repression finds a parallel in the covert ways in which erotic love flourishes on cold winter nights, as bodies become entangled in pursuit of warmth, lost but for the other. The existential threat posed to romantic love by the culture of narcissism engendered under globalised capitalism sets the stage in Li's work for the negation of the self, in the radical recognition of another, as espoused in the writings of cultural theorist Byung-Chul Han.

This commingling of two entities is found not only in humankind but in the natural world too, and Li's work explores the role animal pollinators play in the reproductive lives of plants. Such co-evolved relationships encapsulate the exuberance of life in connection with erotic activity and, therefore, death.

In this new body of work Li also investigates the ways in which desire manifests and, notably, declines under the 'pharmacopornographic regime', a term coined by philosopher Paul B. Preciado to describe the intersection of the pharmaceutical and pornographic industries.

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Li Hei Di (b. 1997, Shenyang, China) lives and works in London. She received her MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art and her BA (Hons) from Chelsea College of Arts and the Maryland Institute College of Art. In 2024, Li will have a solo exhibition at Pond Society, Shanghai and will be part of a group exhibition at Le Consortium, Dijon. Recent exhibitions include Kohn Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2023); X Museum Triennial, Beijing (2023); Marguo, Paris (2023); Green Family Art Foundation, Dallas (2023), TX; CICA Vancouver (2023); Gagosian, Hong Kong (2023) and Pippy Houldsworth Gallery, London (2023), amongst others.

Notes to Editors

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