

NIGHT GALLERY

2276 E. 16th Street, Los Angeles, California 90021

nightgallery.ca

SARAH AWAD

Tender Observer

September 25 – October 23, 2021

Night Gallery is pleased to present *Tender Observer*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by Sarah Awad. This is the artist's second exhibition at the gallery.

In many capacities, the paintings in this presentation carry a through line from past bodies of work: fragmented figures materialize from abstracted expanses, provoking complex figure-ground relationships and navigating one another as much as the pictorial space. However, the tenor of these paintings differs from previous works. The events of the last year and a half have shifted the artist's understanding of what it means to be alone—and with it, the failure of language to capture the profundity of that condition. In *Tender Observer*, Awad attempts to create a painted language that understands the self as precarious.

The dislocation produced by social isolation and the natural solitude of studio life has prompted the artist to question the assumed position of self in relation to others. The paintings reflect this line of inquiry. Awad uses water-based dispersions and oil paint to build up a compositional balance between accident and intention. Welcoming interplays between opacity and translucency, Awad scrapes and scumbles graphic, bold shapes into abstract color fields from which subjects begin to reveal themselves. Figures emerge and retreat within the canvases, at once drawn to and distanced from one another. Each painting differently considers how bodies operate within space, and how color and shape mediate physicality. Painted space acts as a vessel for the body and as a container for figures' myriad gestures.

Every painting in *Tender Observer* contains groupings of figures—a phenomenon at first occurring without conscious deliberation, but afterward understood as a painted articulation of questions surrounding social proximity and the self. Isolated from the pair, a third figure often acts as a mirror, simultaneously reflecting and refracting the more legible bodies within their shared surroundings. The placement of each subject echoes the breakdown of verbal language: pieces of the body are dislocated from the whole, literally broken down into parts. As language continues to fail, visual forms of communication are proven to be in a similar state of disintegration.

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Awad deftly apprehends the slipperiness of the visual plane without fear or hesitancy, inviting viewers into dynamic moments of intimacy. While the events and subsequent aloneness of the last year and a half can't be undone, her paintings make an offering of attention, care, and tenderness.

Sarah Awad (b. 1981, Pasadena, CA) has recently exhibited at L.A. Louver, Venice, CA; V1 Gallery, Copenhagen, DK; Garis & Hahn, New York, NY; Dryansky Gallery, San Francisco, CA; Long Beach City College Art Gallery, Long Beach, CA; Galerie Ernst Hilger, Vienna, AT; and the College of Creative Studies Art Gallery at UC Santa Barbara, Santa Barbara, CA, among others. Recent solo exhibitions include *Double Field* at Night Gallery, Los Angeles; *Gate Paintings* at Diane Rosenstein Gallery, Los Angeles; and *The Women* at Diane Rosenstein Gallery, Los Angeles. She is the 2011 recipient of the Joan Mitchell Foundation MFA Grant and her work has been reviewed in *Artillery*, *Modern Painters*, *Art in America*, *Artsy Editorial*, *ArtScene*, and *New American Paintings*, among others. Her work is in the permanent collections of The Britely, West Hollywood, CA and the Hotel Figueroa, Los Angeles. Currently, Awad teaches on the faculty of the Claire Trevor School of the Arts at UC Irvine. She lives and works in Los Angeles.