

27 Emerging Artists Reflect on the Impacts of Isolation on Selfhood and Community

Myselves, opens on September 11 at Kohn Gallery in Los Angeles | 09.14.2020 by Margaux Bang



Heidi Hahn, Woman I Know, A Woman I've Seen, 2020, oil on canvas, 72 x 60 inches

What does selfhood mean during times of extreme isolation? This is only one of the many thought-provoking questions that Myselves, opening on September 11th at Kohn Gallery in Los Angeles, might be able to answer. The group exhibition, curated by Joshua Friedman, features over twenty-five established and emerging contemporary artists who use their medium as a means to examine the various ways that our environment shapes our identity.

From Salman Toor's paintings to Chiffon Thomas figurative assemblages, the group show features works that span a wide array of media. As artists reflect upon selfhood's unstable and ever-changing terrain, the materially diverse grouping of artwork provides insight into the ways that tangible mediums can be intertwined with meaning. Viewers will encounter the weavings of Erin M. Riley and Sophia Narrett, whose intricate tapestries and embroideries examine the construction of the self on social media and the internet in a way that meshes ancient weaving techniques with popular culture imagery.

During times of extreme self isolation in the age of the internet, selfhood takes a whole other meaning. "This year has made image sharing, sexting, video chatting more mainstream. I'm so curious how this will change image consent and slut shaming, revenge porn, etc." said Erin Riley, the Brooklyn-based artist who works primarily in hand-woven techniques. "This time was also spent thinking about and existing in the reality that even platonic touch was off the table" she continued "Much of my work touches on image sharing, sexting, and the allure of one day being able to fulfill those desires. But also the nostalgia of touch, how long does it take to forget what it's like to be touched?" Myselves

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crystalizes how contemporary artists like Erin Riley, Chiffon Thomas, Amoaka Boafo (the Ghana-born, Vienna-based artist who collaborated with Dior Men in the making of the Spring Summer 2021 menswear collection), and more, have reflected upon this unique moment in history.

At a time when human contact is synonymous with danger and the art world has become almost entirely virtual while humanity has experienced some of the largest protests against police brutality, it's hard not to wonder how 2020 will translate into contemporary art. For Heidi Hahn, a New-York based artist whose painting *Woman I Know, Woman I've Seen, 2020*, explores selfhood in the context of female sexuality and isolation which will be featured in the group show, "most of the time the women exist in a solitary headspace, untouchable and unknowable" she added "perhaps this time has just personified those ideas for me". That being said, this year's events have made it more difficult for Hahn to engage in her work. "I find it hard to put aside a pandemic and political unrest and carry on creating something that resides in an intellectual framework and trades in a formalism devoid of the present reality". She continued "I think the future of the art world will become insular. If you are a maker, you have the compulsion to make regardless of if you are able to show it to the world". However, for William Brickel, a London-based artist known for his portraits of slender young men who contort themselves in states of existential ennui, "when I have worked through my thoughts I'm sure something will surface" he said "I don't feel as though I fully understand what it is I've been feeling" he continued "my imagined world still carries on, pandemic or not".

But as Contemporary Art relies so heavily on the dialogue around cultural identity, one cannot overlook the impact that this year might not only have on Contemporary Art but the art world as a whole. "Art is for everybody and it should be made by everybody" said Erin Riley "We have been through so much, from months spent in isolation to some of the biggest protests against racism and police brutality" she continued. "The ramifications of this year will have a huge influence on the art that is made but also that is seen, it will allow more voices to be heard and hopefully lead to more understanding".

Not to be missed, *Myselves* is a unique opportunity to experience how over twenty-five contemporary artists have engaged in their practice during this crucial moment in history. The show opens September 11th at Kohn Gallery in Los Angeles.