

In "Sex & Sensuality" at Salomon Contemporary the Eros-filled works by Ghada Amer, Cecily Brown, Will Cotton, Eric Fischl, Nir Hod, Billy Sullivan, Su-en Wong and Darius Yektai find their full sensorial expression through painting, drawing, embroidery and sculpture.



Ghada Amer's embroidered scene of Sapphic pleasuring evokes the full ephemerality of the act and the disintegrating memories of languorous carnal pleasure. Will Cotton, Su-en Wong and Nir Hod address the projection of sexuality through the spectacle of social fantasy and the mass-mediated body, Eric Fischl and Billy Sullivan's images of male nudes are tinged with the casualness and awkwardness of youthful vigor, while Cecily Brown's depicts an orgiastic fête galante with rabbits in a furious state of satyriasis. Their ludic cavorting with humans pushes the buttons and the envelope of what constitutes the bounds and boundaries of lovemaking and of public (human/animal) behavior. Darius Yektai's ingenious play with surfaces and planes in his work interjects a sense of remove and separateness to what would otherwise be a scene of passionate encounter in a bedroom. This exhibition addresses the private urges, drives and sensations that make us fully human as it attends to the passions that create the need for pleasure through empathy, connection and memory. With its aura of vitality, enchantment, tenderness, disorientation and a touch of the salaciously bawdy, "Sex & Sensuality" visually seduces us as it alludes to the paradoxical nature of the desiring self, its construction, and of one's own impossible passions.

The exhibition's artists address the deepest dimensions of our sense of self in remarkably nuanced ways. The selected works point to the often inarticulate feelings that emerge out of the lustful drives and their lack that fuel what French philosopher Jean-François Lyotard has termed "libidinal economy." What is addressed, most deliberately through indirection, is how in visual terms such a system of embodied drives might or might not impact our emotional happiness quotient, a projected condition psychologist Daniel Gilbert has referred to in his writings as "future hedonic state." Importantly, in "Sex & Sensuality" the artists don't set out to make a point through their works as much as they intend to strike a mood, create an atmosphere or induce emotional states in which the viewer can feel soma and psyche engaged in amorous (and often conflicted) pursuit.

"Sex & Sensuality" is promiscuous in its pleasure-seeking. The optical gratification that is the result of the acute physical engagement of each artist with his or her materials is visibly tangible as is the priority towards representation of the sexualized, nude, body. This intensity recalls Santayana's "beauty is pleasure objectified" dictum in no uncertain terms. Art itself is a type of body. It is embodied thought, of the kind

Similarly the narrative of inadvertent arousal of sexual desire (apprehended through the tinge of voyeurism) in inappropriate places give rise to a release of libidinal energies often creating a comedically poignant, yet loaded, episode that refers to the instincts that sustain sexual drive. One might of course not be in control of such forces as they may be in some way both of the body and the body's undoing, so to speak. In many of the works in this exhibition the individual body and the body of social space are depicted or referred to analogically.

In all of his work, Darius Yektai involves the viewer in what might be termed an atmosphere of "indwellingness." His depicted spaces whether they are of a social, that is public, nature or of a more private kind allow the viewer a privileged point of access to a suffused and deepened atmosphere which has a story-telling feel to it. In *On Our Bed* (2007) the artist as man invites us into the conjugal space of seduction

as well as into a space of inventory, which defines the man as artist. Yektai offers the bedroom to the viewer an entry point into his private life as well as into his professional life. We see examples of artwork displayed for us on the wall to the left of the large window that frames the cutout silhouette of his female beloved. She approaches him on her knees, the splayed legs of her lover inviting her towards the painting's foreground and to us. The play of transparency in this work creates an area of vanishing, a zone of indeterminacy in which Yektai's sensuous depiction of the surfaces of things and their bodies no longer hold our attention. Instead the sheer immediacy of the wood board surface outlining the woman's contours and her suggested forward movement confronts us, implacably, as void, where the illusion of soft flesh should be placed. This leaves us as viewers in quite a paradoxical situation. Yektai's spatialization play accommodates various readings referring to the sign of the female body inhabiting empty space that relates to the dimensional somaticized male body. Is this painting narrating the story of a casual relationship that exists in the space of imaginative

projection, a one-night stand? Is Darius Yektai perhaps applying the cutout technique to metaphorically suggest an account of a once fully embodied sexual physicality that has been displaced over time by incorporeal soulfulness?