

# A.I.

# APSARA STUDIO

'by a thread'

Co-curated by Jenn Ellis & Emie Diamond

Presented by A.I., 1A Tenter Ground, London, E1 7NH

October 5-29, 2022

Opening Oct 5, 5-8 PM

General Opening Hours: Wed - Sat, 12:00-17:00. Frieze Week Hours: Wed-Fri, 12:00-18,00; Sat 10:00-18:00

Artists: Betsy Bradley, Cecily Brown, Jeremy Everett, Yee I-Lann, Lidia Lisbôa, Robert Mapplethorpe, Katy Moran, Dawn Ng, Fiona Ones, Christina Pataialii, Jessica Rankin, Alan Schaller, Angela Su, Nicole Wermers, Nicole Wittenberg

## MEDIA RELEASE

**Announcing 'by a thread', a historic to contemporary international group show co-curated by Jenn Ellis and Emie Diamond presented by A.I., set in the iconic site of 1A Tenter Ground, Spitalfields, London.**

'by a thread' is rooted in its contextually rich location - the historical tenter grounds used by seventeenth-century Huguenot weavers. Existing within the walls of a Victorian workshop turned influential female artist's studio, the group exhibition draws inspiration from classical antiquity's emphasis on the nude figure, to the narrative tradition of textile, to the subtext of silk, to the consumption of beauty. 'by a thread' combines established and emerging artists to engage in geographical as well as physiological dialogue through the primary senses of sight, sound and touch. Weaving figuration with abstraction, sculpture with painting, photography and installation, the exhibition welcomes tensions and urges points of exchange around explorations of gestuality and physicality, permanence, and the ephemeral.



1A Tenter Ground, Spitalfields, 2022

Set across two rooms, the first explores themes of commerce, history and identity. One initially encounters a set of archival and exhibition source material, from an eighteenth-century map of the area to an editioned copy of 'Orlando' by Victorian author Virginia Woolf. Exploring in a first instance the context of workmanship, Yee I-Lann (b. 1971, Malaysia) presents a woven piece. Part of her 'TIKAR/MEJA' series, created in collaboration with sea-based and land-based communities in Sabah Borneo, I-Lann sets a tone for thinking about tradition and the act of making as well as geographical belonging. In conversation with the elements of craft, practice, and empowered being, 'Memórias de rendas 9', 2020 by Lidia Lisbôa (b. 1970, Guaíra, Brazil), nods to the repetitive nature of crochet, which she practised as a child, and her time in an haute couture studio, before commencing her artistic production in 1991. In tandem, Fiona Ones' (b. 1986, Germany) 'Thread' (2019) series created as a resident at the Josef & Anni Albers Foundation in Senegal, employs light, surface, and negative space in her desire to challenge parallels between drawing and photography.

Repetition, movement, and a sense of self open a thoughtful conversation with the intricate hair embroidery on silk work 'Blasons anatomiques du corps féminin' (2016) by Angela Su (b. 1958, Hong Kong). Accompanied by a video 'Sewing Lesson' in which one hears the whirring of sewing machines, evocative of silk weaving looms, Su sensorially adapts a series of old French poems that fetishise the female body: the mouth, cheek, throat, hand, etc. Exploring the tensions between labourer and consumer, sensual being and powerless object, Su's work bridges a link with the bodily-focused works of Robert Mapplethorpe (b. 1946–1989, USA), Alan Schaller (b. 1988, United Kingdom) and Cecily Brown (b. 1969, United Kingdom). A key and unique self-portrait, Mapplethorpe's 1986 work, depicts him youthful, intent, chest bare yet horned as if unabashedly evoking an alter-ego. Meanwhile, Schaller, a leading street photographer, captures a woman in the shadows, identity shrouded. Recalling mystery and notions of intimacy around fabric, Brown's sombre palette in 'Black Painting I' (2002) emphasises a tension built around pleasure and torment, desire and release, empowerment and entrapment.

Investigating gestural, the second room of 'by a thread' brings together artists who explore form and evocation. Set in dialogue with the visually textured setting of the space's history as a painting studio, there is a strong sense of physiology. Comparatively cathartic to the multilayered complexity of room one, this space leans deeper into evocative feeling. 'She Oaks, First Poem' (2017) by Jessica Rankin (b. 1971, Australia) melds abstract shapes with delicate embroidery. Words and lines act as spines, exploring a mental map. Similarly, 'The week I felt somewhat O.I' (2022) by Katy Moran (b. 1975, United Kingdom) is an extension of her train of thought, an expression of a point in feeling, being, and time. Thinking about the present, 'Ever See, Ever Be, Ever Know My Heart' (2022) by Dawn Ng (b. 1982, Singapore) is the final utterance of a fully melted frozen block of ice, the pigments rising and evaporating to create a topographical surface.

Bodily in tone and delicate in its bespoke hanging, Ng's work draws a relationship with the cascading work 'Exhale' (2020) by Betsy Bradley (b. 1992, United Kingdom), which feels like an elongated breath. Light in pigment and movement, it seems to caress the room, bringing to the fore a sense of one's skin, a feeling that is further felt abstractly in 'Pink/Blue Gauze' (2021) by Jeremy Everett (b. 1979, USA). Comparatively figurative, 'Elizabeth in Her Sun Hat' (2019) by Nicole Wittenberg (b. 1979, United States) alludes to a sense of touch, caress and precocity. Rooting back to a sense of place and how memory plays a role in its articulation, Christina Pataialii's (b. 1988, Aotearoa, New Zealand) painting touches upon composition, domesticity, and perspective. Similarly, Turner prize-nominated artist Nicole Wermers (b. 1971, Germany) explores material and surface, emphasizing the precariousness of objects. Often referencing humanity's need to project personal desire into what they see, Wermers brings us full circle with the themes of creation and effect explored in room one.

Ultimately, 'by a thread' is a moment to unravel memories behind the origins of a building and weave new ties to the present. Layered in historic and geographic breadth, the show raises capricious connections between labour, commerce, the female form, sexuality, impermanence, and power, opening a pluralistic consideration of time, space, and objecthood.

**For more information and enquiries contact: [info@a-i-gallery.com](mailto:info@a-i-gallery.com)**

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### **About A.I.**

Based in London, A.I. is a gallery platform and curatorial project space for emerging artists; it is committed to encouraging an East-West dialogue. It is founded and directed by Anne-Marie Tong.

### **About APSARA Studio**

APSARA is a global curatorial studio led by a sensitivity for art, space and context. Founded by curator Jenn Ellis in 2019, with decades of industry experience from Hong Kong to London to Geneva to New York, APSARA makes meaningful projects and connections happen. With a belief that art is one of the most empathetic yet critical mediums by which one can communicate about topics, APSARA's thoughtful and innovative projects have been featured in Art Review, The Art Newspaper, Artnet, Artsy, ARTnews, Elephant Magazine, Wallpaper, Evening Standard, Modern House, Vogue, amongst others; institutional collaborations include Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Hayward Gallery and Tate. In particular, APSARA is passionate about creating long-term sensitive dialogue, across regions, mediums and disciplines.

### **About Jenn Ellis**

Jenn Ellis FRSA is a curator, founder and patron from Colombia, Switzerland and the UK based in London. Passionate about the thoughtful meeting of art, space and context, Jenn has created over the last decade thoughtful projects internationally that have been featured in the Evening Standard, BBC, ArtReview, Financial Times, Art Newspaper, Vogue, and others. Jenn is the founder of curatorial studio APSARA, which has collaborated with leading galleries and museums globally including Tate, South London Gallery, Silverlens, Lehmann Maupin, amongst others. Jenn is equally the co-founder of acclaimed virtual platform AORA, which combines art, architecture and music to instill a sense of calm and wellbeing. She also co-hosts podcast Between Two Curators, lectures at various institutions including Sotheby's Institute of Art, collects contemporary art, is a Tate Young Patrons Ambassador and sits on the council of Chisenhale Gallery. Jenn Ellis holds a Law Degree from King's College London and a History of Art Degree from the University of Cambridge.

### **About Emie Diamond**

Emie Diamond is a writer, curator and art historian based in London. She received a History of Art master's degree from the Courtauld Institute of Art, where she specialised in curating modern art under the direction of Dr. Natalia Murray. Emie's dissertation analysed the portraiture of Gertrude Stein and she has a special interest in portrayals of the female figure, which was the focus of her final curatorial project. She received a prior master's degree from Harvard University where she analysed contemporary art culture. Emie was academically published by the Courtauld's annual peer-reviewed journal for her review of the Serpentine Gallery's Jennifer Packer exhibition. She was also selected by the biannual periodical Woman's Art Journal to review 'Suzanne Valadon: Model, Painter, Rebel,' which will be published Autumn 2022. Emie is a contributing writer for Cultured Magazine and has been commissioned by a range of publications including Hunger Magazine and The Critic Magazine. Additionally, she has a curatorial platform where she produces exhibitions in alternative spaces and her shows have been featured by W Magazine, Vice, ARTnews, Huffington Post, among others. Emie has participated/ led panels at Soho House and Sotheby's.