
CHARLIE SMITH LONDON

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Wednesday–Saturday 11am–6pm or by appointment

EMMA BENNETT

Volcano Lovers

PRIVATE VIEW Thursday 17 October 6:30-8:30pm

EXHIBITION DATES Friday 18 October – Saturday 16 November 2019

GALLERY HOURS Wednesday-Saturday 11am-6pm or by appointment

'It's the mouth of a volcano. Yes, mouth; and lava tongue. A body, a monstrous living body, both male and female. It emits, ejects. It is also an interior, an abyss. Something alive, that can die. Something inert that becomes agitated, now and then. Existing only intermittently. A constant menace. If predictable, usually not predicted. Capricious, untameable, malodorous.' Susan Sontag

CHARLIE SMITH LONDON is delighted to present Emma Bennett's 'Volcano Lovers'. Known for her exquisite paintings where she sets still life, game, interior and other elements against monochromatic black grounds, Bennett introduces us to an entirely new and dominant motif in this exhibition.

In recent years Bennett's work has increasingly explored the uncanny by juxtaposing seemingly incongruous elements within a black void. Leading on from Susan Sontag's philosophical novel 'The Volcano Lover' (1992), Bennett inexplicably interweaves the volcano as motif alongside her traditional elements, amplifying the sense of cognitive dissonance further.

There is, however, a defiant internal logic within these paintings. Fruit, flowers, game, burning fires are of course memento mori. They are fulsome and life affirming but are fleeting, reminding us of the ephemeral nature of life. Bennett adopts the volcano as memento mori, but also acknowledges its threat which is, again, life affirming:

'I'm interested in volcanoes as both givers and takers of life. Life evolves out of volcanoes and it enriches the earth...it provides fertile abundance. And therefore, people set up their homes in close proximity to the volcano where the land is rich and plentiful. In Naples, Mount Vesuvius looms over the city as a constant reminder of what might happen. Yet people live here and Naples buzzes with the excitement of that danger.'

By adopting volcanoes as her core subject Bennett's paintings shift emphasis from still life to landscape and the volcanic harbinger takes its place as a contemporary symbol of the sublime. Its overwhelming physicality and menace induce awe and wonder. By combining the volcano with her ongoing motifs Bennett utilizes it as, again in Sontag's words, a 'visible metaphor for uncontrollable forces – of love, violence, of burgeoning revolution'. We might justifiably add beauty, brutality, fear and desire.

Please contact gallery for images and further information

BIOGRAPHICAL

BORN 1974

EDUCATION 1997 – 1998: MA in Fine Art, Chelsea College of Art and Design; 1993 – 1996: BA (Hons) in Fine Art, Central Saint Martins College of Art & Design

SELECTED EXHIBITIONS 2019: Volcano Lovers (Solo), CHARLIE SMITH LONDON, London; 2018: Sammlung Reydan Weiss. "Ohne Etikett fühle ich mich freier...", Herzog Anton Ulrich Museum, Braunschweig; 2017: Haunts (Solo), CHARLIE SMITH LONDON, London; doing identity. Die Sammlung Reydan Weiss, Kunstmuseum Bochum, Bochum; In Memoriam Francesca Lowe, Old Truman Brewery, London; Nature Morte: Contemporary Still Life (curated by Michael Petry), Guildhall Art Gallery, London; 2016: I Prefer Life: Reydan Weiss Collection, Weserburg | Museum of Modern Art, Bremen; 2015: Several Small Fires (Solo), CHARLIE SMITH LONDON, London Flora (curated by Alex Boyd Jones), Aberystwyth Arts Centre, Aberystwyth, Oriol Davies Gallery, Newtown; Die English Kommen! – New Painting from London (curated by Zavier Ellis), Galerie Heike Strelow, Frankfurt; 2014, 100 Painters of Tomorrow, Beers Contemporary, London; Saatchi's New Sensations and THE FUTURE CAN WAIT (curated by Zavier Ellis, Simon Rumley & Rebecca Wilson), B1, Victoria House, London; Still Life: All Coherence Gone? (curated by Frances Woodley), BayArt Gallery, Cardiff; Fleursdumal (curated by Dolly Thompson), Lion and Lamb Gallery, London; 2013: Emma Bennett (Solo), Chapter Arts Centre, Cardiff; 2012: And, Afterwards (Solo), CHARLIE SMITH LONDON, London; Kalliphilia, Vegas Gallery, London; East Wing X: Courtauld Institute, London; 2011: Saatchi

Gallery & Channel 4's New Sensations B1, Victoria House, London and THE FUTURE CAN WAIT (curated by Zavier Ellis, Simon Rumley & Rebecca Wilson); Polemically Small (curated by Edward Lucie-Smith), Klaipėda Culture Communication Centre, Klaipėda; THE FUTURE CAN WAIT presents: Polemically Small, Torrance Art Museum, Torrance (curated by Zavier Ellis, Edward Lucie-Smith, Max Presneill & Simon Rumley); 2010: Death & Co (Solo), CHARLIE SMITH LONDON, London; New British Painting, Gallery Kalhama & Pippo Contemporary, Helsinki; 2006: John Moores 24 / Liverpool Biennale, Walker Gallery, Liverpool; 2002: Emma Bennett: New Paintings (Solo), Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art, London; 2001: A Month in the Garden, The Museum of Garden History, London; 2001: Bittersweet, Danielle Arnaud Contemporary Art, London

COLLECTIONS

K & K Kollektion, Monaco; Preiskel & Co, London; Julian & Stephanie Grose, Adelaide; David Roberts, London; The Reydan Weiss Collection, Munich; private collections in Germany, Italy, Switzerland, United Kingdom and United States
