

**POPPY JONES***artgenève 2023*

Solo Show

English version

**Opening: Wednesday January 25<sup>th</sup> 2023, 2-9pm****Exhibition: From 26<sup>th</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

In her essay "The Problem of Reading" artist Moyra Davey considers the joys and difficulties of reading as a creative practice. She meditates on the dilemma of choosing what to read but also returns again and again to the idea of the reader as writer – to those people who read with a pen in hand and a notebook close by, always ready to jot down a thought before it slips away. Davey writes that "reading in this manner is tied to productivity, to making something." She goes on to discuss the solitary aspects of reading, Virginia Woolf's fondness for uncelebrated journals and travelogues, and Roland Barthes' musings on the relatability of mundane biography in *The Pleasure of the Text*. For both writers, a diaristic self-consciousness about the generation of writing – its stylistic precedents, materials and location – always pervades the writing itself.

This honesty and self-consciousness of process shapes Poppy Jones' new solo exhibition with Galerie Mighela Shama for *artgenève*. The nine intimately scaled paintings capture biographical moments of thought, the small revelations which prompt us to make a sketch or write down a quotation. Each work begins with a **photograph shot by Jones. These images – indelibly linked to a time and place – are then taken through a process of mono lithographic printing onto fabric, combined with painting in watercolour.** *Garden Notes (Midday)* and *Garden Notes (Olive Tree)* show the interior pages of a lined notepad bathed in diffuse outdoor light. The paintings are teeming with marks which hint towards cursive script. The lines on the pages hesitate over the suede like the tracings of a seismogram and the shadows of plants float across like strokes from an ink wash painting. Both suggest imminent writing and their literal and metaphorical openness recalls the asemic drawings of Irma Blank and Mirtha Dermisache.

*Crescents* and *Waking* depict lamps and again, there is a sense of potential, of a moment suspended when you look up from reading. Celestial thoughts inflect these everyday objects. This quality is particularly pronounced in the golden glow of *Crescents*, where the light projected from the lampshade resembles a sunrise. This chimes with the interaction between the grey blue and light suede in *Waking* which forms a fuzzy horizon line. At the same time, both have a kind of grounded, stoic quality, the stillness of an image caught in a mirror. They seem to bear witness to the activity around them – to reflect the feeling of homely relationships. This quality recalls photographer Carrie Mae Weems's *Kitchen Table Series* (1990) in which human activity of all kinds – passion, apathy and sorrow – dances around the same room. For Jones these moments are quieter and more solitary, suggesting the point at which an idea for a new work comes to light and the effort of holding onto a certain framing, magic or vanishing quality begins.

*Green Shine*, *Pale Light*, *Red Tulip* and *Deep Bloom* all detail the heads of flowers; their moments of beauty before they begin to droop. These still lifes are rendered in a single hue and succeed in being both muted and animated simultaneously. Jones captures the flowers' energy and vitality, lending them an anthropomorphic quality. *Green Shine* and *Red Tulip* have a particularly cinematic air too. The stained-glass green bouquet in *Green Shine* is chased dramatically by its own shadowy

image while the cherry colouring of *Red Tulip* lends the solitary flower a film noir glamour. These arrangements form part of a domestic background for the artist and, as such, they intermingle with quotidian thoughts and also spark new painterly ideas. Like the notebook paintings, fingerprints and hand gestures are visible in *Deep Bloom* and *Pale Light* – **as if the** flowers had just been handled or rearranged.

Together, the set of introspective vignettes give a sense of the routines that make up a day or a week. Each painting is suffused with the atmosphere of a different time, a subtly different activity and mood. Clouded with the colour of thought they appear as individual checkpoints in an ongoing creative and diaristic practice which explores, turns over and depicts the domestic. *Winter/Heat*, which shows the closely cropped front of an emerald green puffer or down jacket, stands out from the other pieces. The jacket is a motif Jones often returns to and within this suite of works it most closely suggests a body, functioning as an oblique kind of self-portrait. It marks a transition from interior to exterior and from private to public. The lights are switched off, books shut and front door closed.

Calum Sutherland