

Artissima

2–4 November 2018



Elmgreen & Dragset

Couple, Fig. 23, 2017

MDF, PVC, aluminium, stainless steel

220.3 x 48 x 32 cm (each)

86 3/4 x 18 7/8 x 12 5/8 in

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Victoria Miro is delighted to participate in Artissima with a presentation of monochrome works exploring themes of portraiture by Stan Douglas, Elmgreen & Dragset, Alex Hartley and Francesca Woodman.

In his celebrated series *Midcentury Studio*, 2010, **Stan Douglas** takes up the conceit of a fictional photojournalist as central protagonist. The series follows an orderly sequential chronology, yet Douglas defies straightforward storytelling conventions in favour of more elaborate constructed narratives in a questioning of authorship and reality. This affords him the chance to create a series which, whilst being rooted in the contemporary, evokes the aura and preoccupation with melodrama of the mid-century through the guise of jugglers, actresses, magicians, carnival curiosities, paparazzi and crime scene reportage. Through these characters, Douglas carefully choreographs the underlying tension of the era and documents a series of events highlighting a historical nascent dystopia. *Hockey Fight, 1951*, 2010, presents a precisely measured conflict, in which a brawl has broken out amongst two spectators of an unseen hockey game. The image, shot from above in an unnerving, unfamiliar perspective, so that only tops of trilby hats and slicked-back hair can be seen, leaves only two identifiable facial expressions to be seen amongst the mass; that of the grimacing, contorted fighter laid on his back, and the calm, focused interest of a female onlooker.

Throughout their career, **Elmgreen & Dragset** have redefined the way in which art is presented and experienced. Drawn from *The Named Series*, the surfaces of which consist of white wall paint carefully removed from prominent museums and public galleries by professional conservators and applied to canvas, works such as *Pinakothek der Moderne*, 2012, and *New Museum*, 2012, lend new significance to a typically disregarded 'background', simultaneously drawing on the history of the readymade and the legacy of Minimalism. Their *Self-Portraits*, 2015, are representations of museum wall labels of other artists' works, including Mary Heilmann, Dieter Roth, Allan Kaprow and Elaine Sturtevant. While wall labels ordinarily are not an integral part of a work of art, the artists have appropriated and transformed them into art works in their own right – over-sized and constructed from some of the most art-historically time-honoured materials, such as marble. The title of these works signal a personal layer of reference, in which each title relates to a special experience or emotional development in the artists' own lives. They question what a 'self-portrait' can be in our current cultural climate. In a similar vein, *Couple, Fig. 23*, 2017, a pair of diving boards attached vertically to a wall, assumes figurative connotations, while making reference to Minimalist art, as well as to the duo's large-scale public works: *Van Gogh's Ear*, 2016, an upright, nine-metre-high swimming pool in the shape of an ear, which was first displayed outside the Rockefeller Center in New York in 2016; and *Zero*, 2018, created for the Bangkok Art Biennale (on view until 3 February 2019).

In his series *The Houses*, **Alex Hartley** brings together photographic and overlaid painterly elements to examine the idea of the viewpoint, the frame and the boundary – between interior and exterior, manmade and natural environments, public and private space, two and three dimensions. Iconic examples of modernist domestic architecture, photographed by the artist over the past twenty-five years, primarily in Los Angeles, form the basis of these atmospheric monochrome works, in which the photographic image lies separated beneath hand-painted elements – describing and embellishing a verdant landscape – applied directly to a layer of semi-transparent acrylic. While these works straddle a line between painting and sculpture, Hartley prefers to think of them as 'portraits', explaining that 'because of my twenty-odd year obsession with these houses, they do have personalities to me. And often, while many of these buildings are very famous, the image of them you might find in a magazine or architecture journal doesn't seem to me to reveal the personality of the building. I think that's partially why I was driven to take on those angles and viewpoints, because the idea of approaching something obliquely is similar to the way that you might make a portrait, as a way of getting closer to the real thing...' Examples include several of the houses that were developed as a result of the Case Study Program, experiments in American residential architecture sponsored by Arts & Architecture magazine, which ran intermittently from the mid-1940s until the mid-1960s, and which changed the careers of Richard Neutra, Pierre Koenig and, to some extent, Charles and Ray Eames. Works on view include *Grace Miller House (North Elevation)*, 2018, an early building by Neutra, completed in 1937, which was built for Grace Miller, a dance therapist, in Palm Springs, and *Lovell Health house (Entrance)*, 2018, also by Neutra, built for the physician and naturopath Philip Lovell in 1929 – the first true steel house in the USA. *Case Study #8 Eames House (Entrance)*, 2018, features the building designed by the Eameses for their home and studio, which has been revisited in Hartley's work many times, and in various materials and formats, over the course of his career.

Photographs by **Francesca Woodman** (1958–1981) include a number of works completed in Italy and relate to the current exhibition Francesca Woodman: *Italian Works* at Victoria Miro Venice (until 15 December 2018). Born and raised in the United States, Woodman considered Italy her second home. She lived in Florence for a year as a child, attending second grade at a public school there, and spent her adolescent summers in Antella, Tuscany, where her parents purchased a farmhouse when the artist was eleven years-old. Between 1977 and 1978, she spent a year in Rome at the Rhode Island School of Design's European Honors Program, which proved pivotal to her artistic development. One of the key influences of Italian art on Woodman's work was in her precise use of composition, which became more sophisticated during her time in Italy, as seen in *Untitled, Antella, Italy*, 1977-1978. In addition to immersing herself in the study of historic painting and sculpture in Rome, Woodman made strong connections with Italian artists her own age, and through them discovered the Pastificio Cerere, an abandoned pasta factory transformed into an art space. It was in the cavernous spaces of the Cerere that she made some of her most iconic images – such as *Untitled, Rome, Italy*, 1977–1978, and *Several cloudy days, Rome, Italy*, 1977-1978. In Italy Woodman extended her development of classical subject matter, predominantly the female nude and tropes of still life and classical composition. At the same time she was enhancing and extending her use of narrative and performative strategies to reveal her own body in various stages of transformation, deformation, alteration and effacement, using it as a framework in which to create and alter her material identity.

For further press information please contact:

Victoria Miro Kathy Stephenson | Director of Communications | kathy@victoria-miro.com | +44 (0) 20 7549 0422

Rees & Co Alice Evans | alice@reesandco.com | +44 (0) 75 1547 5411 | +44 (0) 20 3137 8776