

Arusha Gallery: New Exhibitions

The festivals may be behind us, there may be a chill in the autumnal air, but hibernation is not an option for Edinburgh's art scene. On Tuesday Arusha Gallery previewed three new exhibitions, each of them with its own story to tell.



From the Heart is Gillian Mather's second solo exhibition at Arusha. Mather is interested in exploring new approaches to figurative art, and here she brings us a room full of tigers. Mather likes pink (she's even – strikingly – dressed in it), and the majority of her tigers are portrayed in simple, spare brush strokes of pink or yellow. Some are playing, some are staring

one another out, some, painted in green, purple and yellow, are lying peacefully together on a swathe of green grass. A particularly appealing painting shows a tiger simply looking out at us with his beautiful almond-shaped eyes.

Mather's style is intended to recall prehistoric cave paintings, as she strives to avoid what she sees as unnecessary cultural influences. She is interested in the Native American concept of animals representing the souls of humans, and hopes to express the emotion of human love through her art.





Rhiannon Salisbury graduated from the artist-led painting programme at Turps in London just a few weeks ago, having previously studied at Chelsea College of Art. The paintings in her exhibition



Accessorise with a

Tiger are based on pictures of women in magazines, images that she has reappropriated, exposing the surreal in contemporary fashion photography. In

Sick Insect a tall woman in a geometric-pattern dress slouches past a male onlooker; she is indeed stick thin, but at what cost? *The Jet Set* is an engaging picture of two bejewelled and behatted women in blue look down their patrician noses as they





chat. It is only on closer inspection that one sees that they might be in a smart swimming pool, their heads actually clad in ornate bathing caps. They are ladies who lunch, but precede that lunch with a trip to the spa. In *Versace Editorial* we are again confronted by the model slouch;

this time she is draped over a car, reminiscent, perhaps, of a Roxy Music album cover. In Salisbury's title work *Accessorise with a Tiger* a woman dressed in red and black sits waiting at a café table, slightly bored, slightly apprehensive, and coolly oblivious to the tiger posing in the foreground.

Arusha's main gallery space is devoted to Lebanese artist Ilona Szalay's new collection *I'm Going to Show You How to Kill a God*. Szalay is one of Arusha's gallery artists, and her work here is a confident and impressive look at female sexuality, gendered performance, and lust, challenging us to reconsider womanhood and returning power to women who aren't afraid to say no. Most of these works have been made on



glass or aluminium, neither of which absorb paint as a traditional canvas would. Szalay tilts aluminium sheets to  create unusual drip effects, a technique especially effective in *I'm Sorry That You Suffer*, in which a woman in stylised dress stands beside a snake on a lead. Another work on aluminium, *Untitled* (2018) depicts a woman in blue, her hands clasped beneath her chin, her expression – created by such a very few lines of black paint – skilfully communicating disdain and self-possession, but also a slight hesitancy. A series of smaller drawings on paper *Untitled* (2017) shows a  woman in various poses, all outlined in red. In the last image she stands like a warrior, arms flexed, with something that could be a gun holster strapped across her naked body. It is an image full of strength and movement, as is the fabulous *First Nature*; women hold hands in a circle, leaning backwards, looking up to a bright orange sun. Ecstasy and abandon are the over-riding emotions in this triumphant, celebratory painting.

Energy and excitement flow through the work of all three of these imaginative painters, who share a playful approach to different subjects, from high end fashion to ferocious beasts.

Gillian Mather *From The Heart*, Rhiannon Salisbury *Accessorise with a Tiger* and Ilona Szalay *I'm Going to Show You How to Kill a God* are at Arusha Gallery, 13a Dundas Street, Edinburgh

until 11 September 2018. Contact the gallery on 0131 557 1412 for opening times.

With thanks to Adeline Amar, Communications Director, Arusha Gallery.