

**SWANK
GROUP SHOW**

September 2 - September 23, 2017

(Los Angeles, CA) - Thinkspace is pleased to present *Swank*, a group show dedicated to showcasing nine artists from the gallery's roster, whose work and recognition are on the rise. Each brings their own unique stylistic and technical approach to their practice, and though they share loose affinities, the grouping demonstrates the diversity and latitude of the New Contemporary Movement. Michael Reeder, David Rice, Tran Nguyen, Wiley Wallace, Molly Gruninger, Alex Garant, Sean Norvet, Christopher Konecki, and Lauren Brevner were curated by the gallery for this exhibition as promising new voices to watch on their ascent.

Michael Reeder

Dallas-based painter Michael Reeder graduated with a BFA in painting from the School of Visual Arts in New York and works as both a fine artist and freelance graphic artist. Reeder combines figurative references with abstract motifs, graphic patterns, negative space, and an illustrative style to create concise and impactful compositions. Exploring the shifting of identities and the instability of the self as central themes, Reeder uses the portraiture element in his work as an armature around which visual signifiers are hung. The paintings begin with the same reference image of a stranger, rather than a particular individual, to emphasize the general universality of the themes, and to stress the alterable and transfiguring aspects of the human in flux. Reeder taps into a feeling of dislocation and absence as a trope for the volatility of the individual caught in the incoherence and discontinuity of the modern day. Psychologically provocative, Reeder's paintings are thoughtful deconstructions of the fragmented self.

David Rice

David Rice is a Portland-based artist, illustrator, and designer. Having grown up in rural Colorado, Rice is deeply inspired by nature and its wildlife. The natural world figures prominently as a recurring theme in his detailed works, as he combines the human with the animal in playful and unexpected encounters. By individuating his animals as personified subjects rather than undifferentiated specimens, they take on new symbolic and narrative value as extended metaphors. Geometric patterns and graphic motifs are drawn from textiles and other decorative elements to tie his compositions together. These elements punctuate his works with moments of abstraction while also referencing contained, domestic human spaces in stark contrast to the limitlessness of the wild.

Tran Nguyen

Born in Vietnam, Tran Nguyen emigrated to the US with her family at the age of three. She completed a BFA at the Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia. Interested in exploring the psychologically evocative potential of the surreal, she channels visual dreamscapes as a therapeutic means of investigating the mind's potential to heal through imagery. Her practice is drawing-based with graphite and pencil figuring prominently in her works on panel as well as on paper. Delicate and softly diffused, highly detailed figurative elements in the works are set against expanses of vaguely defined space. Playing with shifts in scale and context, Nguyen allows her powers of free association to shape and turn her shadowy worlds.

Wiley Wallace

Wiley Wallace completed a BFA in intermedia arts at Arizona State University and an MFA from University of California, Santa Barbara. A painter with a metaphysical interest in surreal worlds and pseudo-science fiction themes, Wallace often depicts his own children as protagonists on the edge of unknown universes. At times eerie and even grotesque and others understated and subtle, his works combine a dizzying array of visual devices to denote suspension, transition, or immersion in alternate realities. At times realistic depictions deliquesce into abstract blurs of bright colors, while at others subtle apparitions make their way into otherwise unassuming everyday scenes. His ambiguous depictions feel like personal meditations on mortality, the existence, and dissolution of boundaries, and the presence, whether literal or philosophical, of worlds beyond.

Molly Gruninger

A graduate of Ball State University, Los Angeles-based Molly Gruninger is interested in exploring themes like camouflage, the contemporary role of technology in our society, identity, and the shifting nature of perception. At first glance, excessively smooth and dimensionally ambiguous, her figurative works appear to be digitally generated. Upon closer inspection, however, they are in fact highly detailed oil paintings on canvas. Exploring the idea of self-ornamentation, and by proxy the excessive nature of materialism and consumption in contemporary society, Gruninger pushes the artificiality of self-adornment to a literal point of complete synthetic conversion. In a compelling inversion of process, Gruninger creates photorealistic depictions of a seemingly digitally generated form, creating a subject that exists in some strange hyper-real limbo.

Alex Garant

Toronto-based artist Alex Garant creates portrait paintings with a combination of hyper-realistic painting techniques and a graphic aesthetic. Garant intends to overwhelm and saturate the viewer's senses with an optical distortion, creating subjects that seem captured through multiple exposures. Using an alla prima technique in which layers of wet oil paint are applied over top wet under layers and executed in a single sitting, Garant creates hauntingly beautiful figures that seem to actually reverberate with frenetic energy and life, somehow caught off-register between temporal dimensions or physical layers of reality.

Sean Norvet

Los Angeles-based artist Sean Norvet attended Pasadena's Art Center College of Design, graduating with a BFA in 2013. His unique take on portraiture relays a chaotic and satirical mash-up of cultural references. Distorting the human anatomy of his subjects to the point of total obliteration, his portraits become grotesque, clever and playful amalgams of skin, random objects, food, detritus, type, and cartoons, all parodying the more abhorrent and absurd aspects of American life. Norvet's subjects become literal and observational reflections of their context and periphery. It's as though the person's face, identity, and corporeality are engulfed and consumed by the culture in which they're immersed. Combining a photorealistic painting technique with an excessively cartoonish and hyperbolic artificiality, Norvet seizes the viewer in a hallucinogenic distortion of portraiture.

Christopher Konecki

Sand Diego-based Christopher Konecki is a self-taught painter, muralist, sculptor, and installation artist. Drawing inspiration from his surrounding environment and an experimental

penchant for the creation of new forms, Konecki creates works that harness a feeling of stylistic chaos and strategic balance. Interested in the reuse of found materials, he revitalizes public spaces and castaway objects to elevate them aesthetically and change the perception of their value. Natural imagery figures prominently in Konecki's work as he explores the intersection of urban manmade spaces and architectures and the ubiquitous prevalence of technology alongside disproportionately scaled wildlife elements. This juxtaposition of worlds highlights their conflicted coexistence in the modern city and the absurdity of their tangential relationships. His palettes are often cool and subdued, an understated stylistic choice that refocuses attention on the dynamic interaction of the compositions' disparate facets, and synergy of its parts.

Lauren Brevner

Vancouver-based artist Lauren Brevner explores the feminine in her mixed media portraiture. Using oil, acrylic, and resin, she incorporates Japanese chiyogami, yuzen, and washi papers through collage as well as gold and silver leafing, both traditional Japanese techniques, as an homage to her roots. In 2009, she moved to Osaka, Japan, to reconnect with her cultural heritage and ancestry, and this immersion has had a significant impact on her artwork. Inspired by 19th-century Japanese art, as well as Western European Art Nouveau and Symbolist painting of the same period, and modern abstraction of the early 20th century, Brevner's work feels both contemporary and historically referential. Her use of flattened graphic space is offset by the detail of her delicately rendered portraits. Striving to re-appropriate the vantage point of the "gaze," her work seeks to counter the objectification of the feminine, empowering her subjects as sensual and self-possessed entities.