

GAGOSIAN GALLERY



London – Jenny Saville: “Erota” at Gagosian Gallery Through July 9th, 2016

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Jenny Saville, Ebb and Flow (2015) © Jenny Saville. Photograph by Ashmolean Museum Photo Studio

Jenny Saville is known for her large-scale oil paintings of bodies in flux, and associated with flesh in all its forms: living, dead, young, old, human and animal. There is a fascination with the mass, weight, and transmutability of the body that runs throughout Saville’s impressive and applauded career, and now, Gagosian’s London space is presenting *Erota*, an exhibition of new drawings by the artist that equally represent a continuation of themes, questioning of previous work, and a departure into new territory.

An early cornerstone of London’s Young British Artists group, the Oxford-based painter has explored the novelty of new materials here, presenting an approach to the canvas that now includes staining, pastel, and charcoal as well as oil paints. Drawing, according to the artist, opens the possibility for representing scenes or figures concurrently in one frame, a palpable freedom that sees these drawings practically writhe with the shapes of its subjects, moving into, through, and around each other. The multiplicity pictured is impressive and fascinating, fitting the press release’s description of the works as “landscapes that reveal themselves to the viewer in real time.”

As with her previous work, Saville brings a modern perspective to traditional technique. The influence of the Old Masters — Rembrandt and Titian, to name a few — is present in these drawings, yet the artist’s fascination with the human form, also seems to expand into new

ground. The “world in flux,” presented in these images is somehow more accessible than previous representations, and the artist’s approach has softened as well. Where there was once an interest and investment in representing grotesque, vulnerable or stripped iterations of the human form, there is now an erasure of the boundaries between discreet bodies, a gradual blending of space and identity. Whereas Saville’s previous work possessed certain harshness and even violence, these drawings exude an acceptance of beauty.

In *Ebb and Flow*, one of the most carnal pieces included in this exhibition, bisecting limbs, overlapping torsos and dissociated hands synchronize and scramble any attempts to orient a single, recognizable body out of these multiple parts. The effect of this piece speaks to the beauty that Saville has constructed with these drawings: that of representing life and living form as boundless.

The rawness of “Erota” trains the eye not just to qualify individual parts or characters in an image, but to identify an aliveness of flesh that the artist has managed to capture and represent in these drawings. The exhibition closes on July 9th.