

“You did the impossible

See, I had almost given up

And now I love ya like Sunsets, bubble baths on the jet”

Mariah Carey, *The Impossible*, 2009, *Memoirs of an Imperfect Angel*

Zeinab Saleh’s interdisciplinary practice explores the themes of personal memory and intimacy.

The economy of Saleh’s brushstroke is so distinct that it is instantly, and intimately, linked with the artist’s hand. It is through these works that Saleh shares with us not only a musically orchestrated display of light-licked forms, at times resembling trembling inky brooks at dusk, and the flickering light through a London window, but also an interior space, one of slow and powerful contemplation. The works hold an emotional register that oscillates across the surface, offering a softness and intimacy that is as powerful as it is ephemeral.

Meditating on moments of tenderness the exhibition *j-o-y-r-i-d-e*, presents a group of new works on canvas and works on paper, alongside an older video work ‘4 star wedding’, which features archival footage of members of Saleh’s extended family, who were married on the same day in 1996. The diamanté adorned wedding, caught on VHS, depict at once intimate and simultaneously expansive moments of joy and celebration, in particular here for a family who, having fled the Somali civil war and arrived in the UK with very little, and these moments were considered practically ‘Impossible’.

The language of the paintings is in turn inextricably linked to that of the recordings and family footage. Saleh’s now distinct and signature technique sees the use of acrylic, charcoal and chalk swept across the canvas, revealing depths of texture, shade and colour. Forms are often repeated within the frames: the curl of a ribbon, henna on hands, the lattice of a railing, or the hem of a dress. Hands appear frequently in Saleh’s paintings. Valuing the ability of gesturing hands to create a bodily language, these simple forms speak directly to human connection, and collective experience. In profound and vital ways, these works engage with the intimacy of time, both the marking of it and its passing. Narrative is alluded to, but never fully disclosed, allowing for the viewer to place themselves within her works, and encouraging an attentiveness to the connections that bind us, or follow us - for a shadow is a feeling.

Zeinab Saleh, born 1996 in Kenya, lives and works in London. Saleh studied at Slade School of Fine Art.

Recent solo exhibitions include *Softest place (on earth)*, Camden Art Centre, London (2021), and *Softest place (on earth) [Extended mix]*, Château Shatto, Los Angeles (2022).

A 168 page artist book ‘*Exhale*’ has been published to coincide with the exhibition. Further details are available by contacting info@champlacombe.fr

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