

# Louise Giovanelli

## *Soothsay*

May 12 – June 30, 2023  
GRIMM, 54 White Street, New York, NY (US)



*Entheogen*, 2023

**GRIMM is pleased to present *Soothsay*, a solo exhibition of new paintings by Louise Giovanelli (b. 1993, London, UK). This will be the Manchester-based artist's fourth solo exhibition at GRIMM and her third at the New York gallery.**

Expanding upon motifs that recur throughout her oeuvre, in particular curtains, stages, performers and vessels, Giovanelli considers the mouth as a site of transformative possibility in her new work. She continues to explore an interest in thresholds: zones or places of change where action occurs, focusing keenly on moments of contemporary spiritual reverie. The mouth as threshold is underscored by the exhibition title *Soothsay*, referring to a prognosticator or prophet who predicts and speaks the truth.

The exhibition marks the US debut of a new series of paintings titled *Entheogen*, which features an appropriated 1970s film still image of a young woman taking the Eucharist. Giovanelli repeats the image across the series of works, though distinguishes each with subtle and deft variations of cropping and color that prompt closer viewing and deeper contemplation.

The narrative implications of the image become increasingly elusive, as the religious underpinnings of the subject's euphoric state begin to shift towards more provocative interpretation. The title *Entheogen*, which refers to psychoactive substances often used in ritual and spiritual contexts and is rooted in the Greek word *Entheos* meaning full of God, reinforces this narrative ambiguity where tropes of religious iconography, hallucinogenic drugs, and sexual revelation coalesce.

A new series in the exhibition of correlative enigma to *Entheogen* adapts a still image from a 1980s pornographic film. The woman's expression in this series is akin to that of the Eucharist-receiving subject in *Entheogen* and in pairing these works together, Giovanelli aims to further blur the divide between erotic and spiritual rapture. An undertone of dark humor is exposed when considering this visual conflation and its position on a spectrum that spans from religious innocence to carnal corruption to the illicit.

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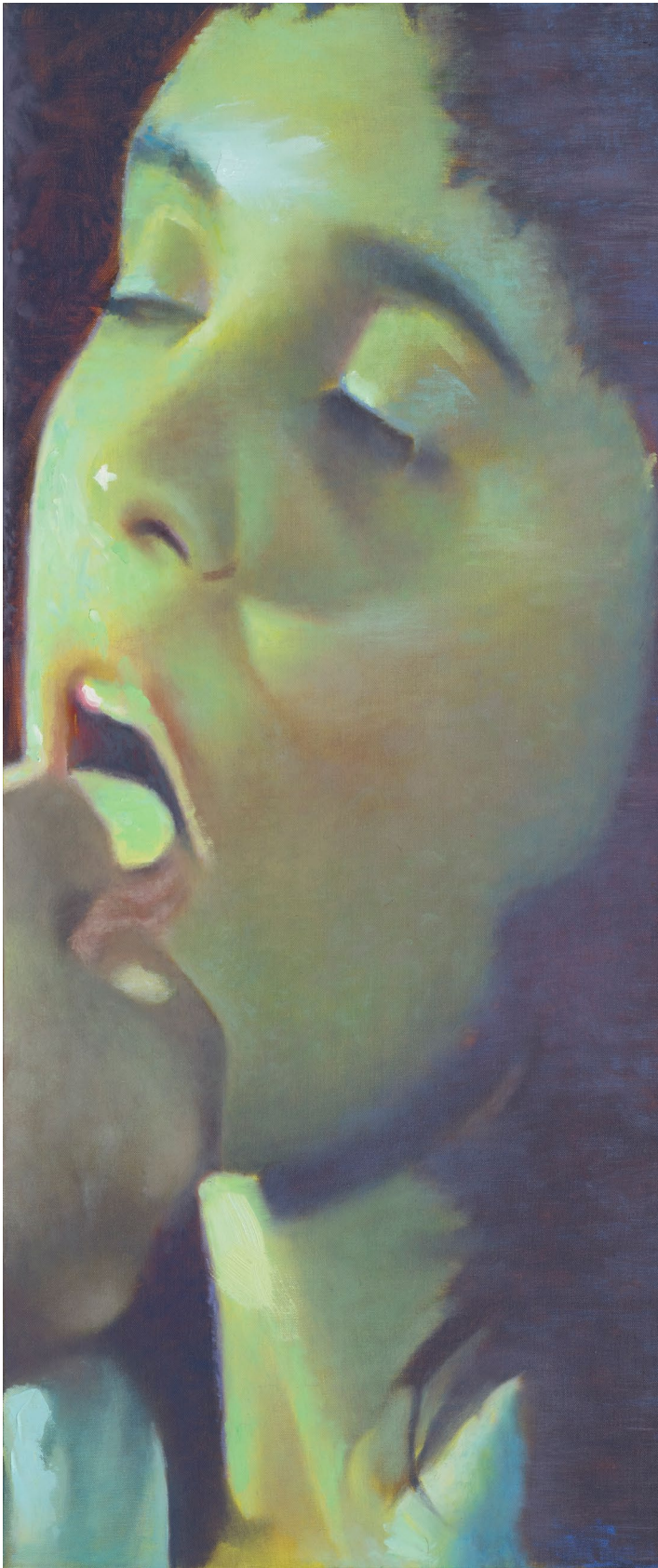
54 White Street  
New York, NY 10013  
United States

Keizersgracht 241  
1016EA Amsterdam  
The Netherlands

2 Bourdon Street  
London W1K 3PA  
United Kingdom

Tel +1 (212) 280-3877  
info@grimmgallery.com  
www.grimmgallery.com

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Detail | *Entheogen*, 2023

A deep-rooted interest in the canon of Western Art and Renaissance painting remains, not only in Giovanelli's technique which often employs a thin glaze of underpainting to her work that emanates glowing luminance, but through highlighting classical motifs such as the elongated female neck and challenging traditional single-point perspective as seen in the works of Fra Angelico and Piero della Francesca. Various new works on view have a thick waxy surface comprised of oil paint mixed with beeswax with the image painted in a thin layer on top, a method that holds weight and time within the painting's surface, while other works employ a fine, pointillist technique that achieves a hazy surface effect that further heightens the depiction of transcendental experience.

A large-scale painting of a curtain bookends the exhibition, offering an element of monumentality amongst extreme intimacy. Its gleaming gold surface is suggestive of curtains one may encounter in a shady nightclub. This serves as an anchoring device and backdrop to the *Entheogen* series on view, augmenting the meaning of the green-hued works and their induced states of ecstasy with its foreboding shimmer.

#### About the artist

Louise Giovanelli graduated from the Städelschule in Frankfurt am Main (DE) where she studied with Professor Amy Sillman. She received her Bachelor's Degree in Fine Art from the Manchester School of Art (UK) in 2015. Recent exhibitions include venues such as Moon Grove, Manchester (UK); Flag Art Foundation, New York, NY (US); White Cube, London (UK); Hayward Gallery, London (UK); AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Amsterdam (NL); GRIMM, New York, NY (US) and C.L.E.A.R.I.N.G., New York, NY (US).

Selected collections include AkzoNobel Art Foundation, Amsterdam (NL); Fundacion Medianoche0 (ES); The Grundy Gallery Collection (UK); Hall Art Foundation, New York, NY (US); The Hepworth Wakefield (UK); Hort Family Collection, New York, NY (US); Kunstmuseum The Hague (NL); Institute of Contemporary Art, Miami, FL (US); Longlati Foundation (CN); Manchester Art Gallery Collection (UK); The National Museum of Norway (NO); Whitworth Art Gallery, Manchester (UK) and a number of private collections.

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