

Vinna Begin

*Featherlight*

Feb 22 — Apr 14, 2024

## Press Release

We are in Indonesia,(1) in front of an ornate building in the woods sits a group of men with drums, metallophones and other percussion instruments of diverse forms and shapes. Wearing golden dresses and elegant turbans decorated with flowers, they start to play a melody which is both familiar and eerie, undulating between fast and slow tempos, cyclically swinging their bodies and their golden mallets, like the leaves and branches of the trees surrounding them. The music is fascinating, uneven and hypnotically repetitive, one of the most unique genres in the world: gamelan. Originally of West Java(2) as the Canadian artist Vinna Begin, it is a music genre almost only played with percussion, an art form based on harmony and cohesiveness, graceful and grainy, it is delicate yet hard edged as the objects depicted in Begin's art. Gamelan has no direct relation to the art by Begin, yet her paintings have a peculiarity and lightness which is hypnotic and impalpable, and a character which is intrinsically musical. *Featherlight*, a discrete quality evoking both lightness and frailty, leads directly into the tone of this musicality and the nature of colours and forms populating the abstract paintings by Vinna Begin. Made of almost only pigments gently layered on canvas, her colour fields are completely see-through, pale and delicate, they allow no mistake in their execution and in

doing so they invite us to appreciate both their hue and the warp and weft of the canvas on which they are applied. Approaching these frail forms is a relaxing experience, and their very shape itself leads sinuously and morbidly into the duplicity of this *Featherlightness*. Moving in wide curves and sensuous gestures, the paintings follow movements which easily could be pictured in their physical form: the arm swinging back and forth upon the canvas, overlapping here, jumping there, slowly undulating elsewhere. This swinging and moving reminds of the hand movements of an orchestra director, and at the centre of the gamelan ensemble we described, there was one man who distinctly was moving his arms and body with exaggerated movements, hence leading the others and giving the time. In the same way, time, as a mallet ceremoniously raised to prepare for a break, together with melody, seem to be the qualities that Begin is so masterful about, setting her slow tempo and leading the viewers into her music. These paintings induce a calm insightfulness, they remind of meditation, of closing one's own eyes and trying to escape thinking, to be focused and present, yet avoiding any thoughts. *Featherlight* might then be no longer only an adjective describing these artworks, but the feeling one would feel by giving time to them. It would be describing the colour shapes one might visualise trying to empty their minds, subduing their emotions and allowing these ecstatic melodies, these calm sound-haikus Vinna Begin methodically paints on canvas to take space and time, in their *lento, ad libitum*.(3)

Mattia Lullini

- 
- (1) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UEWCCSuHsuQ> (Accessed on February the 20th, 2024).
  - (2) And not only, gamelan is in fact the traditional ensemble music of the Javanese, Sundanese and Balinese peoples of Indonesia.
  - (3) “Slow, at pleasure” as by conventional Western music notations.

NEVVEN  
Bologna, Italy  
Göteborg, Sweden  
[www.nevvengallery.com](http://www.nevvengallery.com)  
[info@nevvengallery.com](mailto:info@nevvengallery.com)