

Theta

Alexa Hawksworth

Prolixity

September 13 - October 19, 2024

For her second solo exhibition at Theta, Montréal-based painter Alexa Hawksworth has pulled from a dizzying array of references – cinema, pop culture, corporate design, art history, and her own social world. This conceptual blur is reflected in formal tendencies, through a mix of gestural brushwork evocative of motion blur, loose figuration, and the composition of spaces in the midst of formation. Her paintings are inflected by a chimeric quality in which the surface of the canvas is used to aggregate and materialize the ineffable elements of time, image, and language — a triad fundamental to the process of meaning making. She doesn't approach these elements as discrete, but rather as fundamentally intertwined and inextricable: a crucial form of messiness in which each part is necessary for the existence of the other.

The painted image becomes the space in which to make sense of these dynamics while concerning itself with the “why” and “how” of any given picture becoming canonized. Here, the arbitrariness of recognizability throws into question conventions of iconicity. In *Midnight Candy, Mock Orange* (2024), a cloud of grinning celebrities crowd a red carpet. The faces of Meryl Streep, Cameron Diaz, and Tom Cruise in the foreground give way to anonymous figures and abstract energy in the background, dissipating like a dream. Elsewhere, renderings of stars in the movies *Heat* (1995) and *Marie Antoinette* (2006) are named after their release years, indexing them into history's indistinguishable crush. Two paintings of F1 racers drowning in ubiquitous logos become axes of language more so than personage.

Hawksworth's two largest paintings spotlight individuals from her social circle in tableaux that expound upon aspirational elaborations of self. In *Apex*, a skewed rendering of the artist's partner in the garb of a fine dining server stands in wait before a deliquescent back of house. “Martini”, “Marlboro”, and “Honda” whirl around him like drunken emblems behind a bar, a city, a car, or perhaps a step-and-repeat. In *Directrix*, a friend strides across a scored white canvas, laden with a chaotic amalgam of garments, textures, and patterns. This engagement with fashioning feels counterintuitive to her progression, so overwhelmed by the pursuit of construction, her identity seems to give off fumes.

As *Prolixity's* show title suggests, these works are a confrontation with the problem of excess. Too much information has made postmodernity's interconnected rubble feel inscrutable, and an overabundance of language seems to be failing to keep pace in detailing it. Hawksworth is well-equipped in her use of painting to glean meaning from the wreckage. Canons and icons are plucked and processed through observation and modeling, becoming mutable scenes we might enter via channel flicking. Here, the painting's surface is the only object capable of containing history's depth.

– Leo Cocar

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Alexa Hawksworth (b. 1994, Hamilton, ON) lives and works in Montréal. She received her BFA in 2020 from Concordia University, Montréal, QC. Solo and two-person exhibitions include Bradley Ertaskiran, Montréal, QC (2023); Theta, New York (2022); Projet Pangée, Montréal (2021); Family Exhibitions, Montréal, QC (2021); Sibling Gallery, Toronto, ON (2021). Selected group exhibitions include Public Gallery, London, UK (2023), Harkawik, Los Angeles (2023), Franz Kaka, Toronto (2023) Afternoon Projects, Vancouver, BC (2022).

