



SOPHIE BIRCH AND RACHEL YOUN
FIGURES OF SPEECH

7 MARCH – 12 APRIL, 2025
27 WARREN STREET
W1T 5NB LONDON

Figures of Speech provides a framework for exploring how ‘language’, whether through vibration or pigment, can reveal more than it signals.

Birch’s paintings examine the unseen forces that shape aural and tactile perception. One of her main investigations is around sound, where elements like the ear’s cochlea (which processes vibrations) and the lateral line (an animal hearing sensor) inspire her works. Her layered paintings are made through tactile marks, using time as a medium for transformation.

While Birch’s brushstrokes simulate finger-painted surfaces, Rachel Youn’s sculptures are made from machines built to touch. Youn sources them second-hand, drawn to their functional failure: designed to replicate human fingers, they were never good enough. Youn’s kinetic sculptures use artificial orchids and real dried flower stems, both existing in a state of controlled perfection, untouched by decay in an illusion of desirable beauty. Yet, they are also subjected to relentless motion, enduring the mechanical torment their works impose.

Both artists share an engagement in radical decontextualisation of their points of departure: one dismantles didactic anatomical imagery, the other repurposes massage machines and exercise platforms. In both cases, the reference points become unrecognisable in the final works. For Birch, the anatomical inspiration is transformed into an ambiguous landscape with a great evocative capacity. In the case of Youn, the functionality of their machines is transformed by mixing them with natural or natural-like and human elements to create kinetic sculptures. The results of both creative processes turn the decontextualisation they share into almost opposite cognitive challenges. In Birch’s case, the sensuality of the images could stimulate imaginations of atmospheric phenomena and in Youn’s, the strangeness of the combined elements in loops strains our imagination with erotic resonances and absurd humour. The spectators therefore access the experience of harmony (Birch) and dissonance (Youn) from these trajectories of decontextualisation.

– Text by Vanessa Murrell



ABOUT THE ARTISTS

Sophie Birch (b. 1992, Littlehampton, UK) lives and works in London, UK. She holds a BA in Fine Art: Painting from the Wimbledon College of Art, London (2014) and completed The Drawing Year at The Royal Drawing School, London (2019). Recent exhibitions include: 'Twofold Vision', Baert Gallery, Los Angeles (2024); 'Panta Rhei', Alice Amati, London, UK (2024); 'In Praise of Shadows', Melzi Fine Art, Milan, Italy (2024); 'A Painting Show', Staffordshire Street Gallery, London, UK (2024); 'Fruit and French Windows', Calcio Gallery, London, UK (2023); 'felt cute, might delete later', Arusha Contemporary, London, UK (2023); 'Hawthorn and the Feast of Julian', Arusha Contemporary, New York, US (2023); 'Nobody's Home', Andrea Festa Fine Art, Rome (online) (2023); 'Primeval', Unit 1 Gallery, London, UK (2023); 'Folding Thresholds', dARTS, Paynes Wharf, London, UK (2022); 'OVERSPILL', Terrace Gallery, London, UK (2022); 'Separate Ways Together', 11 Sydney Mews, London, UK (2022) and 'A Plot, Hatched by Two', Yorkton Workshops, London, UK (2022).

She was a part of the Dumfries House Residency in Scotland in 2023, and was shortlisted for the Contemporary British Painting Prize in 2022.

Rachel Youn (b. 1994, Abington, PA) is an American artist working across sculpture and installation. They received their BFA from the Sam Fox School of Design & Visual Arts at Washington University in St. Louis and completed their MFA at Yale School of Art in New Haven, CT (2024). Recent solo exhibitions include: 'Pleasure Circuit', Soy Capitán, Berlin, DE (2024); 'Well-Adjusted', Night Gallery, Los Angeles, CA (2023); 'No Pain No Gain', Sargent's Daughters, New York (2022); 'Revival', Soy Capitán, Berlin, DE (2022); 'Greener than grass', Truman State University Art Gallery, Kirksville, MO (2022); 'Underparty', HAIR + NAILS, Minneapolis, MN (2021).

Selected group shows include: 'A Garden of Promise and Dissent', The Aldrich Contemporary Art Museum, Ridgefield, CT (2024); 'Freshly For You', HAIR + NAILS, New York, NY (2024); 'Gone Fishin', ILY2, Portland, OR (2024); 'A Thousand Plateaus', SHRINE, New York (2024); 'Flawless Waltz', Soy Capitán, Berlin, DE (2024); 'Summer Camp', Sargent's Daughters, New York (2024); 'The Last Laugh', PODIUM, Hong Kong (2024); 'Perfect Trouble: Queering Culturenature', Wave Hill, New York (2024); 'Gestures of Resistance', LINSEED and A.I., London, UK (2023); 'The Butterfly Effect', Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo, Turin, IT (2023); 'Hot Spot', Galleria Nazionale d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, Rome, IT (2022).

Youn is a recipient of the Lighthouse Works Fellowship, Vermont Studio Center Fellowship and the 2020 Great Rivers Biennial Award. They are represented by Sargent's Daughters and Soy Capitán.

ABOUT THE GALLERY

Alice Amati is a contemporary art gallery established in Fitzrovia in June 2023. The gallery is committed to fostering artists at the early stages of their career by often providing the opportunity for their first solo show in the city and a supportive context for artistic explorations and career development. Concerned with encouraging transnational dialogues around topical questions within society and art, Alice Amati brings together British and International artists through a challenging, experimental and rigorous exhibitions programme. Joining a cohort of young and established galleries in the burgeoning artistic scene of Fitzrovia, Alice Amati operates as a platform for new voices in the contemporary global artistic scene with a strong commitment to research, collaboration and diverse practices.

For more information, sales enquiries, interview and image requests please contact: info@aliceamati.com