

Soft Spot

The term "Soft Spot" usually refers to a special affection for someone or something.

More literally, it can also indicate a physically vulnerable area. Borrowing this expression as the title for her first exhibition at Super Dakota, Claudia Koh deals with the complexities of space, memory, liberation, and constraint.

Navigating the dense urban landscape of Singapore, where she grew up, her paintings are infused with personal experiences that trespass countries and cultures.

Claudia Koh's bodies are soft, often naked, and slightly distorted, moving through confined spaces. Large, sleek hands, curvy shapes, and thick limbs emphasize female features, making the figure feel organic — detached from a male idealization of the female body. The women's nakedness feels truthful and vulnerable rather than erotic. They all have Asian char-

acteristics, strongly recognizable at times, yet as we move through the works in the exhibition, they begin to distance from a single identifiable person, as specific details blend into a broader representation. This same variable approach extends to the compositions as well. Painted in dark tones, the interiors are illuminated by dim lights coming from the streets, neighbors' homes, or a lamp as an indication of presence at home. Claudia's style shifts from figurative, detailed, and dark to near-abstraction and colorful tones. Transparencies and overlays

merge elements into one another, reinforcing the layered presence of her subjects—both through their psychological ambiguities and contradictions and in the construction of the composition itself.

Drawing inspiration from painters who have depicted the anxieties of a postmodern society, such as George Tooker or Tetsuya Ishida, Claudia Koh's paintings capture the psychological unease of contemporary life, especially those driven by spatial and conditional constraints. Like Tooker, her use of windows as natural frames draw in the viewer to share a moment of intimacy, where the subjects' vulnerability is exposed, out-lining introspective moments and offering glimpses into solitude, longing, and the shifting notion of home. Koh's paintings, are infused with layered hues and aquatic undertones, evoking the humid atmosphere she experienced living in Singapore. Here, humidity functions as a metaphor for endurance and transformation. Like a glasshouse, her paintings portrait home as an ecosystem where nature is sustained but sometimes not entirely free. Curated with specific lighting, plants, and temperature control, they reflect on the post-modern desire to manufacture comfort and foster some kind of individuality and freedom.

Growing up in Singapore, Claudia Koh is inspired by the rig-

id structures of the city's color-blocked public housing devel-opments. Public housing coined as HDBs (Housing Development Buildings), is prominent in housing about 80% of Singapore's population. These apartment flats were created to address severe housing shortages and provide affordable homes for locals, especially after the 1961 Bukit Ho Swee fire incident. The relocation of villages and "slums" into high-rise

buildings, shared modernist ideals with Le Corbusier's « Radiant City ». As Singapore is also coined as the "Garden City". The housing apartments have units close to one another, so close in proximity that sounds and smells flow into each other's homes. Through her paintings, Claudia examines the paradox of intimacy and detachment in Post-modern living, where proximity offers both connection and alienation. Through overlapping perspectives, fragmented spaces, and reflective surfaces, she explores the ways these physical conditions affect the body, dictate movement, belonging, and transformation.

A few examples of this tension can be seen in works like Tender Trap, where the bathroom floor reveals a human reflection that morphs into a water stain on wood, or in the reflections on the water vase featured in Beginner's Luck. A recurring motif in her work, the Arowana fish—a symbol of prosperity and freedom in Asian culture—appears confined within glass tanks that don't accommodate its size. This mirrors Koh's interrogation of entrapment. Much like the towering apartment blocks it inhabits, the



fish, often kept as a pet, exists in a tight, artificial environment, unable to swim freely. Its freedom is sacrificed in the name of prosperity and Feng Shui. Other Asian symbols appear throughout the exhibition, addressing themes of identity and belonging. In Year of the Rabbit, Claudia plays with the idea of a self-portrait through the lens of the Chinese zodiac. The Chinese zodiac was derived from a mythological race in China held by the Jade Emperor with 12 animals that would be included in the lunar calendar as a measurement of time due to their placements. The rabbit came in fourth, and it represents her birth year, which is often associated with her personality. Double Bliss, carries Chinese characters traditionally used in celebrations of life, like weddings. The use of this symbol in this context is both disruptive and unexpectedly optimistic, as it alludes to union and celebration even in the afterlife. Chinese culture sharp-

ly divides good fortune from death, employing numerous traditions to protect the living from death-related misfortune.

Throughout the paintings in Soft Spot, Claudia Koh explores the delicate balance between liberation and entrapment—the weight of contemporary urban life, where proximity doesn't always mean closeness, and space can

feel both like a privilege and a constraint. In a world where physical, social, and environmental barriers grow ever tighter, her work resonates with the quiet anxieties of our time. Yet, within this tension, she also reaches for something tender: a longing for connection and belonging.

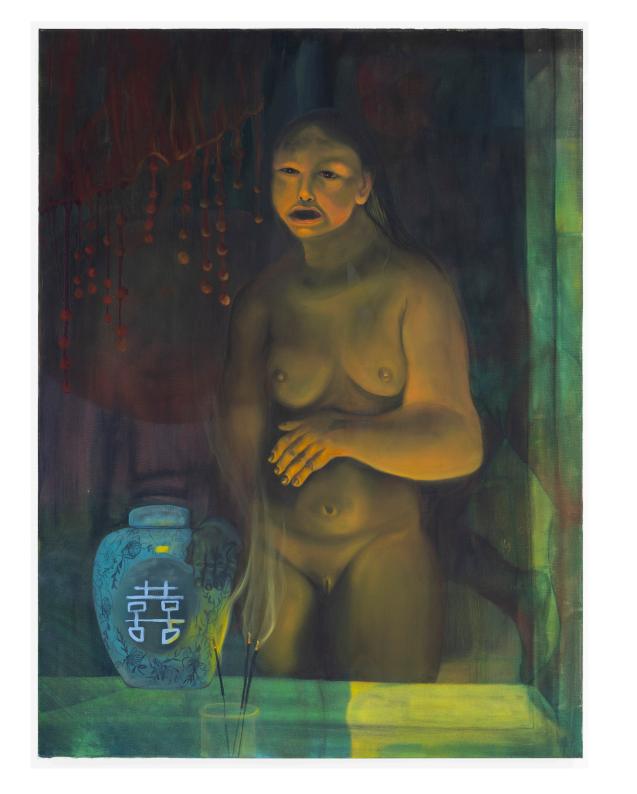




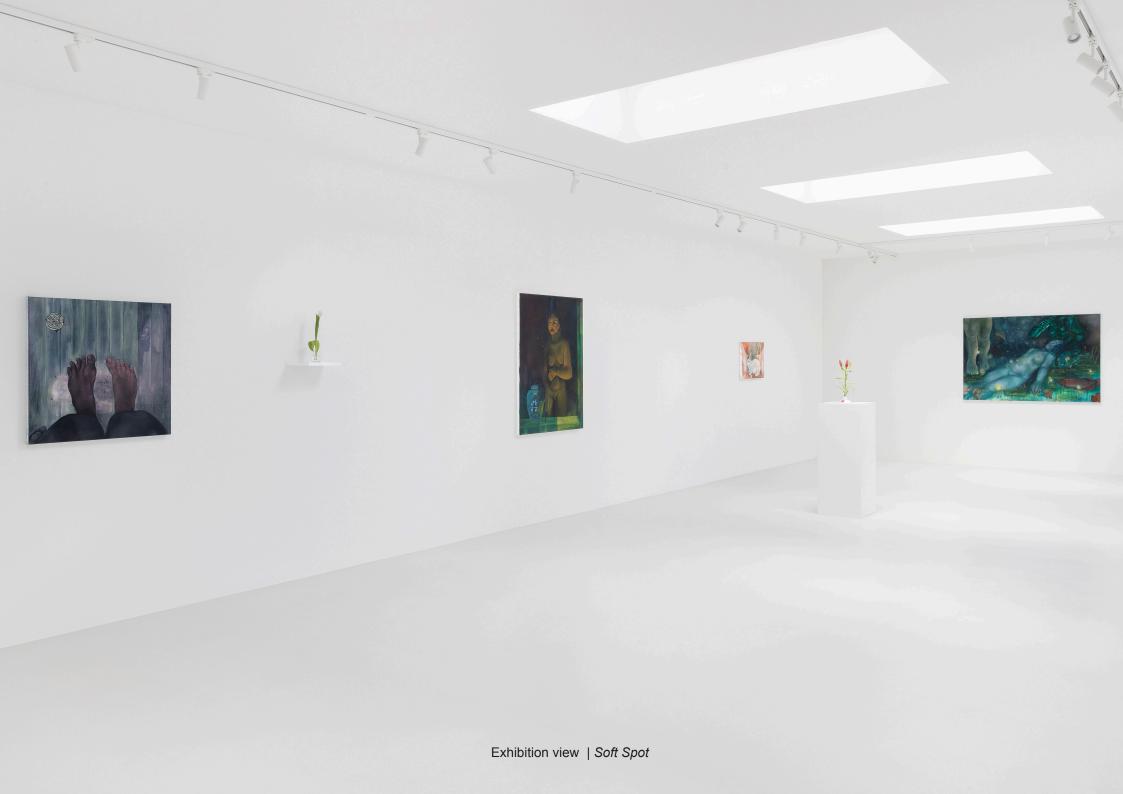
Claudia Koh Night Nest , 2024 Oil on canvas 62 1/4 x 44 1/8 in 158 x 112 cm







Claudia Koh Double Bliss, 2024 Oil on canvas 35 7/8 x 48 in 91 x 122 cm









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Claudia Koh Blind Spot , 2024 Oil on canvas 46 x 46 in 117 x 117 cm

Drawing inspiration from painters who have depicted the anxieties of a postmodern society, such as George Tooker or Tetsuya Ishida, Claudia Koh's paintings capture the psychological unease of contemporary life, especially those driven by spatial and conditional constraints. George Tooker, *Landscape with Figures*, 1965-66. Egg tempera on gessoed panel, 26 x 30 inches. Private Collection.



Claudia Koh My Hands and Feet Gets Cold First , 2023 Oil on canvas 35 7/8 x 48 in 91 x 122 cm









Claudia Koh Beginner's Luck , 2024 Oil on canvas 22 x 28 in 56 x 71 cm



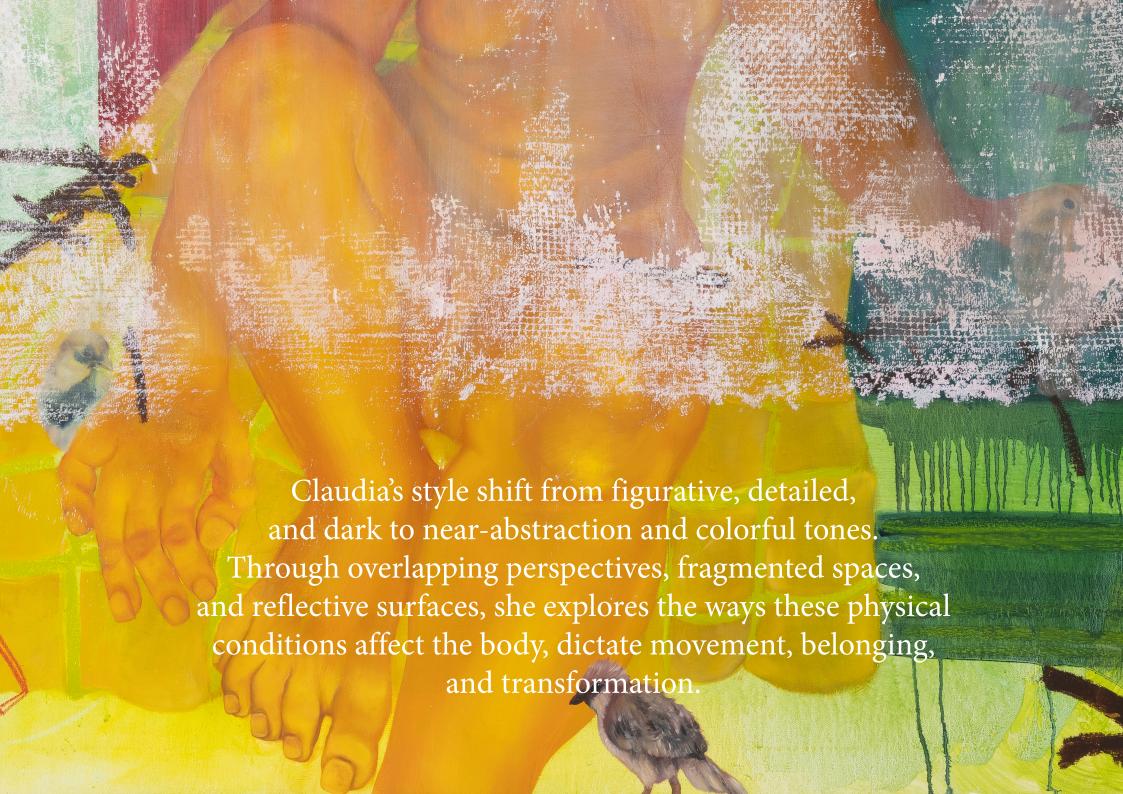


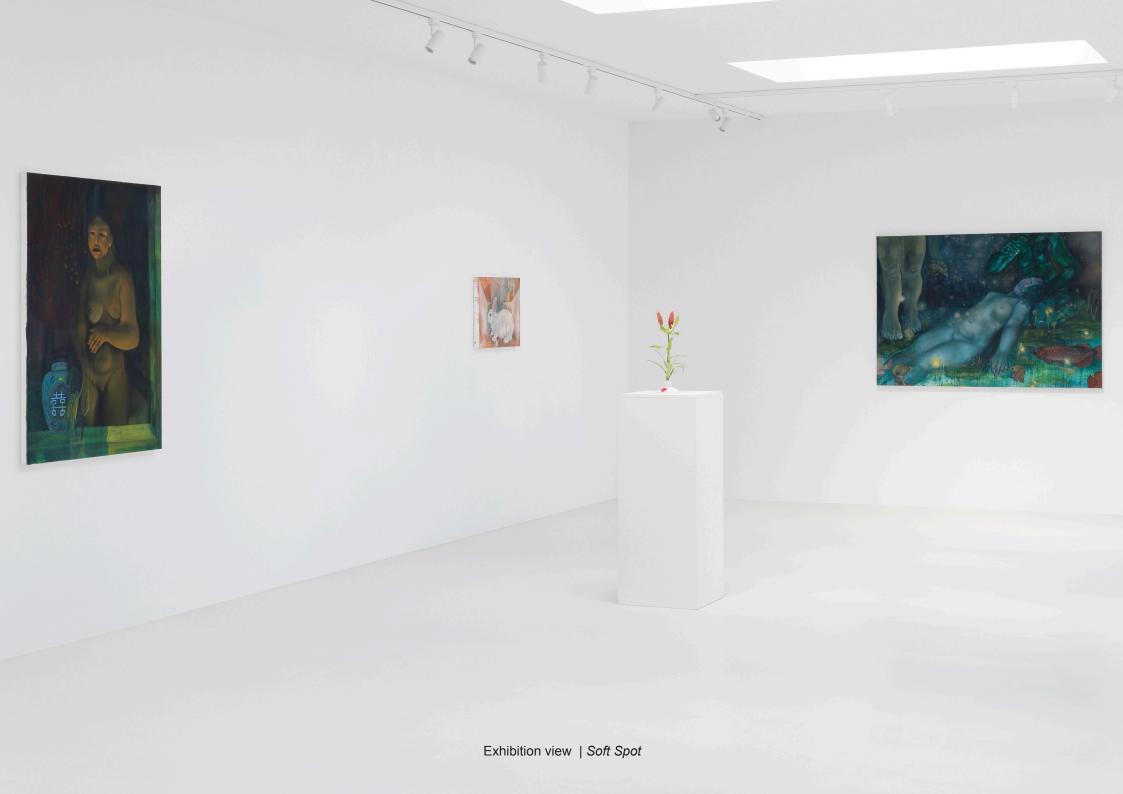


Claudia Koh Radiator, 2024 Oil on canvas 19 3/4 x 19 3/4 in 50 x 50 cm



Claudia Koh Sparrow Dream, 2024 Oil on canvas 48 x 48 in 122 x 122 cm







Claudia Koh Soft Ache, 2024 Fresh lilies, orthodonctic metal wires, braces brackets ceramic, kenzan Various sizes





Claudia Koh Year of the Rabbit , 2024 Oil on canvas 17 7/8 x 24 in 45.5 x 61 cm





Claudia Koh
Against the Stream, 2024
Oil on canvas
16 1/8 × 18 1/8 in
41 × 46 cm















Claudia Koh Tender Trap , 2023 Oil on canvas 29 7/8 x 29 7/8 in 76 x 76 cm



Claudia Koh Soft Ache, 2024 Fresh tulips, orthodonctic metal wires, braces brackets Various sizes





Claudia Koh Bird Watcher , 2024 Oil on canvas 29 7/8 x 29 7/8 in 76 x 76 cm

