

Equal Affections

July 23 - August 28, 2021

Presented at the gallery's two Amsterdam locations:
Van Baerlestraat 80 and Keizersgracht 241

GRIMM is pleased to announce *Equal Affections*, a group presentation with Katherine Bradford, Lyndon Chase, Felix de Clercq, Anthony Cudahy, Ryan Driscoll, Kyle Dunn, Celeste Dupuy-Spencer, Louis Fratino, Lenz Geerk, Jenna Gribbon, Doron Langberg, Justin Liam O'Brien, Michael Stamm and Salman Toor.

The exhibition borrows its name from David Leavitt's acclaimed 1988 novel of the same title and was organized in collaboration with Edwin Oostmeijer. A new essay by Leavitt will be published to accompany the presentation.

The body can be a metaphor for many things. It can be an instrument for experiencing the world, or a vessel for meaning and message. Direct references to the self through memoir and autobiography are central themes in current painting. *Equal Affections* brings together fourteen artists who explore how the self emerges in relation to community and society at large. An inquiry into gender and its representation foregrounds these rich depictions of people and their interior worlds.

Together, these artworks commemorate the look and feel of contemporary life – while some venture into fantasy, others are firmly grounded in physicality. Many can be read as demonstrations of personal identity and this highlights a shift in the way identity is made visible in art, and more broadly in contemporary culture. Similarly, technology as a filter for experiencing others and its influence on the way we present ourselves, are recurrent themes. In each gesture, pose and painted mannerism these artists present a strong argument for the power of integrating the surface and interior of our lives, as an approach to telling one's own personal history.

Katherine Bradford (b. 1942, New York, NY US) layers lustrous washes of paint in meditative works where loosely rendered human figures are immersed in blocks of color. Fleshy, soft tones are juxtaposed and overlapped to create sumptuous, pulsating textures. Bradford's singular figures do not convey a feeling of isolation; instead they are activated by a mystic glow emanating from within.

Lyndon Chase's (b. 1989, Philadelphia, PA, US) paintings communicate the regenerative properties of affection, love, and self-expression through depictions of blackness and queer relationships. Chase recognizes the importance of individual languages of intimacy and beauty that cannot be commodified or estranged from those who speak them. They work across a variety of media – from paintings and screen-printing to textiles, drawing on icons from black culture that were formative to their developing sense of self growing up – while demonstrating an approach to figuration that is attentive to art historical conventions.

Felix de Clercq (b. 1997, Antwerp, BE) paints tight, pensive compositions of private daily rituals in muted tones. A sense of isolation and longing pervades these works, which draw inspiration from a wide range of sources, including: folklore, indigenous art, and the ubiquitous visual language of the internet and streaming services.



Salman Toor | *Downtown Boys*, 2020 | © Salman Toor; Courtesy of the artist and Luhring Augustine, New York.

Anthony Cudahy (b. 1989, New York, NY, US) weaves imagery culled from photo archives, online platforms, art history, and personal photographs to explore themes of queer identity. His evocative figurative paintings are informed by extensive historical research and image collection. They negotiate feelings of loneliness, isolation, desire, and safety through the lens of the artist's own narrative.

Ryan Driscoll (B. b. 1992, Corby, UK) is interested in the personas of Greek and Roman mythology and the realms that these mythological figures embody. His paintings combine classical ideals of beauty with the symbolic language of still lifes, where objects hold individual significance in service of an allegory. Referencing storytelling traditions, music, and great works of literature widely, Driscoll amalgamates visualizations of queer identity often made in the spirit of melodrama and fantasy.

Kyle Dunn (b. 1990, Queens, NY, US) combines traditional trompe l'oeil and bas-relief techniques to capture moments of heightened intimacy in everyday life. His color-soaked interiors are inhabited by male figures in scenes both banal and poignant. Dunn celebrates the male nude and male tenderness in a way that is a break with popular convention. His visual language culls from a multitude of sources including Italian cinema and horror and science fiction novels.

not for publication

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press@grimmgallery.com +31(0) 20 6752465

Van Baerlestraat 80
1071BB Amsterdam
The Netherlands

Keizersgracht 241
1016EA Amsterdam
GRIMM Fine Art BV

54 White Street
New York 10013
United States

Tel +31 (0) 20 6752465
info@grimmgallery.com
www.grimmgallery.com

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Celeste Dupuy-Spencer (b. 1979, New York, NY, US) employs energetic, gestural brushwork and a rich visual language to create portraits and quotidian scenes that mine the American experience. Her dense compositions capture the grotesque imperfections of her subjects with the underlying affection of an intimate. Evoking equal parts existential dread and love, Dupuy-Spencer offers a sprawling examination of society; its faults, contradictions, triumphs, and all.

Louis Fratino (b. 1993, Annapolis, MD, US) draws upon memory, art history, and an amalgamation of visual cues from the canon of Western art to create familiar scenes of coalescing figures in domestic spaces. The works draw their viewer into a rich interior world, where the male figure is presented in a state of casual languidness traditionally reserved for the female nude. Fratino's emotionally charged, atmospheric paintings explore queer identity with a contemplative tenderness.

Lenz Geerk's (b. 1988, Basel, CH) solemn, stately portraits capture a feeling of longing and foreboding. Deeply psychological, his morose compositions reveal moments of mental gravity through body language and micro-expressions. Lenz implements a cool, muted color palette and paints his figures into indeterminate settings to heighten the air of mystery.

Jenna Gribbon (b. 1978, Knoxville, TN, US) paints lush, intimate scenes of (primarily female) friends and lovers, domestic spaces, and staged events with flickering, ebullient brushwork. Fleeting memories, imagined vignettes, and art historical narratives all inform her compositions. Gribbon appropriates the sensuousness and material pleasure of expressionist painting to capture contemporary life and upend existing sexual mores.

Doron Langberg's (b. 1985, Yokneam Moshava, IL) energetic, kaleidoscopic paintings capture his subjects in moments of repose and contemplation in gestural portraits and scenes of mundane happenings. He reserves a special softness for paintings of the male body, often pictured in a state of undress. A palpable, luminous sensuality pervades his compositions.

Justin Liam O'Brien's (b. 1991, New York, NY, US) paintings are self-contained stories that portray personally significant themes. In them, his figures are softly rendered with seemingly indistinguishable features and they appear as ciphers who play out the dynamics of dating, hook-up culture, and more abstract interpersonal relationships. While the driving force behind his compositions are emotional dynamics, stylistically he engages the aesthetics of 3D rendering and digital image-making tools, with a nod to historical movements such as New Objectivity.

Michael Stamm (b. 1983, Evanston, IL, US) grapples with cultural dynamics, human relationships, and personal identity in his visually dense and meandering paintings. Referencing design, literature, and contemporary culture, Stamm probes the connectedness and alienation of modern existence with humor and self-reflection.

Salman Toor (b. 1983, Lahore, PK) conjures lush, atmospheric interiors; realms occupied by queer, worldly urban men who dance, drink cocktails and gaze into the glow of their smart phones. Toor's scenes simultaneously convey a feeling of warmth, nostalgia, and alienation. The works explore representations of gay male identity and reveal the tension between the private and public spheres.

About the gallery

GRIMM was founded in Amsterdam in 2005. Since its establishment, the gallery has been committed to promoting and supporting emerging and mid-career artists who work in a diverse range of media. Representing thirty international artists, the gallery has two spaces in Amsterdam, and one in New York. This year GRIMM expanded to new 6,000 square foot gallery space in Tribeca, New York.

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