

# Close

Curated by Russell Tovey

March 4 - April 6, 2023  
2 Bourdon Street, London (UK)



GRIMM is pleased to present a group exhibition curated by Russell Tovey, opening at the gallery's London location on 4 March, 2023. The exhibition brings together a selection of works by Ellen Altfest (b. 1970, US), Jean Claracq (b. 1991, FR), Lenz Geerk (b. 1988, CH), Nathanaëlle Herbelin (b. 1989, IL), Ulala Imai (b. 1982, JP), Fiza Khatri (b. 1992, PK), Xie Lei (b. 1983, CN), Aubrey Levinthal (b. 1986, US), Jean Nipon (b. 1977, FR), Paula Siebra (b. 1998, BR), Hugh Steers (1962–1995, US), Alexandria Tarver (b. 1989, US) and Salman Toor (b. 1983, PK) - a selection of artists whose work honours the rituals of daily life within the home, revelling in the overlooked beauty within the seemingly mundane.

A catalogue will be published on the occasion of this exhibition.

Reflecting on the exhibition, Tovey has shared his own passage of prose that muses on his own experience of this quiet celebration of domestic joy:

*I used to fall fast asleep as my mother vacuumed our home around me, a metronome of electricity, the dishwasher cycle, tumble dryer, low level melodic droning, a buzz, constant, peripheral, comforting.*

*Satsumas, apples, something more exotic, seasonal, a fig, pomegranate, shrinking into themselves, vibrant tones shifting, as a captive audience reaches for more palatable, gratifying snacks. To be expected, they remain overlooked, decaying, quiet, calm, beautiful.*

*We pass on the stairs, swap rooms, the roar of an empty bath, hot water swelling echoes from behind a bathroom door, dull, predictable, safe. Your instinctual shift from the cooker, the sink, an adjustment allowing access to the cutlery drawer, pairing our metalware, glass, the thump of heavy chopping board cradling plump tomatoes, they bleed into the grain.*

*Fresh folded towels, beds made, dry dust moved, side boards, tv stands, lamps and window sills, the afternoon sun tickled by a breeze.*

This exhibition celebrates daily practices, ingrained moments, a passing of time taken for granted, routine, satisfaction, contentment. The artists chosen for this exhibition are creating work that amplifies a magnificence to be found within these moments. The mundane, ordinary, unguarded and connective - honoured, creating a deeply personal and highly intimate exhibition told through our domestic relationships and the objects that we choose to surround ourselves with.

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For more information, interview and royalty free image requests please contact our London press office:  
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## About the artists:

**Ellen Altfest** (b. 1970, New York, NY, US) always paints from life, drawn towards domestic plants, vegetables and more recently, male models. Altfest immerses herself in an intense analysis and personal engagement with the subject that pushes her vision beyond the real.

**Jean Claracq** (b. 1991, Bayonne, FR) uses his work to deal with issues of loneliness in the social media era, depicting scenes of everyday life featuring isolated individuals against broad infrastructures as an evocation of alienation. His subjects often straddle the departure from adolescence and adulthood, filled with both melancholy and an openness to the future that awaits them.

**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.

**Nathanaëlle Herbelin** (b. 1989, IL) creates bridges between the intimate and the collective, between the personal and the universal: each painting is the result of an event or a relationship experienced and testifies to the different contexts apprehended.

**Ulala Imai** (b. 1982, Kanagawa, JP) paints scenes drawn from both her familial life and popular culture. She transforms her children's toys, quotidian foods, and other household items into mysterious and life-like subjects. Imai turns the materials of her specific family life into repositories for the universal human exchanges that surround them.

**Fiza Khatri** (b. 1992, Karachi, PK) paints and draws a catalogue of intimate moments from her immediate environment. Her tender, spirited brushwork courses with affection and pulls us through the spaces in which she operates. Pointing to the social constructions that shape her world, Khatri speaks to the complexities of articulating and, to an extent, performing queerness.

In **Xie Lei's** (b. 1983, Huainan, CN) paintings, animals and plants are personified, while human characters are intimately incorporated in their surroundings. While these environments are depicted by conventional signs, Xie Lei often eschews delineating ground from sky, and foreground from background, disseminating a sense of ethereality into paintings that look no more like windows into a new world but as symbolist talismans facing the viewer.

**Aubrey Levinthal** (b. 1986, Philadelphia, PA, US) chronicles her everyday life, friends and family, passing moments she experiences or witnesses in her neighborhood, which happens to be in Philadelphia.

Her palette of wan yellows and ochers inflects her domestic paintings with haggard feelings, traces of melancholia, and emotional imbalance.

**Jean Nipon** (b. 1977, Périgueux, FR) has been influenced by masters of classical painting such as Piero della Francesca, Nicolas Poussin, Georges De La Tour or Ingres, and portrays contemporary characters using rare colored pencils found around the world.

**Paula Siebra's** (b. 1998, Fortaleza, BR) practice focuses on images related to everyday life and scenes of intimacy using Brazilian northeastern culture as her starting point. These motifs acquire a peculiar aspect: a certain simplification in the contours, added to a reduction in the contrast between chromatic tones, polarising reality and reverie – as if the artist were daydreaming about ordinary life.

**Hugh Steers** (1962, Washington, DC – 1995, New York, NY, US), before his death at 32 from AIDS-related complications, created allegorical images of everyday life that captured the emotional and political tenor of New York in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Embracing representational painting and figuration at a time when such approaches were deemed unfashionable, his intimate compositions are poignant symbols of life under the spectre of AIDS.

**Alexandria Tarver's** (b. 1989, Houston, TX, US) still life paintings generally concentrate on just a couple of subjects at a time such as flowers and drum kits. Her process involves sketching and photographing her subjects, and then using them as references for her paintings.

**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.

**With special thanks to all participating artists and their representing galleries.**

## About the curator:

Russell Tovey is an award-winning actor and podcaster. His podcast *Talkart* has had over 5 million downloads and his first book, *Talkart: everything you wanted to know about contemporary art but were afraid to ask*, co-written with his podcast partner Rob Diament, became a Sunday Times Bestseller. Their second book, *Talkart: The Interviews*, will be released on May 11, 2023. He has curated multiple exhibitions in and around the UK, Paris and New York and he is a patron, benefactor and ambassador for many institutions and museums.

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