ALMINE RECH

No Man is an Island
Rhea Dillon, Madelynn Green, Li Qing, George Rouy, Sally Saul, Francesco Vezzoli

Sep 1 — 26, 2020 | London

Almine Rech is pleased to present *No Man is an Island*, a group exhibition on view in London from September 1 to 26, 2020.

In 1985 NASA published a book exploring how humans adjusted psychologically and socially to space. 'Living Aloft: Human Requirements for Extended Spaceflight' was the outcome of research to “ease the Earth/space transition”. The book discussed the three broad stages of human reaction to prolonged isolation, confinement, and stress. The first stage is a period of heightened anxiety produced by the perceived dangers in the situation. The second stage involved establishing a day to day routine, peppered with moments of depression. Stage three is a dangerous period of anticipation, leading to “emotional outbursts, aggressiveness, and rowdy behaviour.” All three stages are very familiar to anyone who has made it through the restriction of the COVID lockdown.

We are emerging from a period of limitation and separation. This shift from the norm led to fantasies about simple social experiences – a dinner with friends in a restaurant, dancing in a club surrounded by unknown bodies, café life, a hug of friendship, a kiss. When these quotidian experiences were removed, it was shocking how quickly humanity began to suffer, moving through the three stages of isolation distress with text book speed. This exhibition emerges from this emotional state.

Touch, in particular, is a running motif in the works on display. Touch is the first sense of perceptual experience, though it has often been overshadowed by sight or sound. Yet, we experience the world in a multisensory way. Perception and the body are innately intertwined. These are images and objects that depict physicality and connection. They demonstrate how humans need love and desire despite circumstance. Exuding a joy of life, they suggest an antidote to our anxiety.

Young British artist Rhea Dillon's emotive works questions the freedom of representation and experience, beyond the structures of white supremacy. Her films, photographs and abstract paintings explore emotional narratives and how they are framed by ideas of narrative and queerness, while elevating the African British diasporic experience.

Madelynn Green's dense figurative paintings, drawn from family and archive photography, highlight the joys of densely packed social space. The Slade teaching fellow with a background in political science is drawn to moments of liberation which are found
in nightclubs or other densely crowded scenes.

Li Qing's works also question ideas of perception, both conceptually and visually. His fragmented, narrative works, which range from painting to video, question reality and how it is complicated by the Internet and social media. He takes on intimacy questions to push and pull of connection, and how we as viewers connect to the symbolism of touch itself.

American ceramic artist **Sally Saul,** in contrast, depicts the kitsch and joyful pleasure of romantic connection. She has been working with the medium since the late 1980s, and her textured, conceptual objects explored the representation of gender, memory and emotion with signature humour. (Perhaps the result of 43 years of marriage).

Italian artist **Francesco Vezzoli's** take on the romantic is more baroque. His videos, installations, sculptures and collage pieces touch on classical and Italian art history, as much as the hyper camp of advertising, celebrity and politics. *The Eternal Kiss* (2015) is a neo-neo-classical sculpture, locking found Roman heads into a timeless embrace.

- Francesca Gavin