

SWEET SURRENDER - by Emma Black

Ryan Joseph Gallery

May 11, 2024 – June 12, 2024

Ryan Joseph Gallery is tremendously excited to share our next exhibition, "**Sweet Surrender**", the debut US solo exhibition by Emma Black.

Emma Black:

Emma Black is a visual artist and freelance illustrator from the UK, living in rural England. She graduated in 2012 from the University of Westminster with a First Class honors degree in illustration, and in 2016 from the Cambridge School of Art with a MA in Fine Art. Emma works primarily in oil on wood, graphite on bristol board and a graphite/digital mix for her fine art; whereas her illustrations are primarily graphite and digital.

Emma shares the following thoughts on "**Sweet Surrender**":

"In "**Sweet Surrender**" I extend an invitation into themes of introspection, revelation, and self-love. Through a series encompassing portraiture and still life oil paintings, and a supplementary collection of self-portrait Polaroid photographs, I undertake an exploration into memory, human connection, and the nuanced interplay between internal and external conceptions of beauty.

Central to the thematic discourse of this exhibition is the notion of surrender – a philosophical inquiry into the complexities inherent in yielding to the exigencies of existence. This examination underscores the dialectical relationship between vulnerability and resilience, with each artistic endeavor serving as an epistemological testament to the transformative potential of self-discovery, identity formation, and self-acceptance.

Drawing upon autobiographical narratives as primary source material, I endeavor to unveil the intricacies of personal experience while concurrently extrapolating universal truths pertaining to the processes of growth and transformation. By situating memories as focal points of contemplation, I posit them as agents of ontological formation, capable of leaving indelible imprints upon the psycho-emotional landscape of the human psyche. The butterflies throughout the works represent these memories, as something which is capable of flying away or staying to grow into something new, whether they are discarded or cherished.

Visually my works adopt a surrealist aesthetic paradigm, characterized by juxtapositions of human anatomies with a lush abundance of flora and fauna. These visual tropes serve as allegorical metaphors, emblematic of the symbiotic relationship between selfhood and environmental context, as well as a celebration of the interconnectedness shared amongst all living entities as the figures merge and bring forth new growth, crafting new identities.

Woven into the fabric of this discourse is a nuanced feminist perspective, serving as a critical lens through which to examine established societal norms and power structures, and how we relate to them when viewing our own bodies. Both 'Restrict Your Breath' and 'Suffocate On Eternal Bliss' depict snakes as a nod to Eve, but these intertwine with the growth and are proudly displayed like a thing of irrevocable beauty. Through the utilization of sensual undertones and assertive visual imagery, I endeavor to challenge hegemonic narratives while asserting the agency of the self within a patriarchal milieu.

In addition, this series features a contrast in mediums which is a first for me - while the oil paintings are painstakingly crafted over time, the collection of self-portrait Polaroid photographs offers a raw and immediate snapshot of the self. This juxtaposition serves as a reflection of the duality of human existence - one medium is quick and raw, while the other is slow and polished, yet both capture moments of vulnerability and strength in their own unique ways.

In summation, "Sweet Surrender" emerges as a series wherein viewers are encouraged to consider the complexities of human existence and identity. Through an exploration of themes ranging from memory formation to feminist empowerment, self-love, and medium dichotomy, this exhibition offers a look into the transformative potential of art as a vehicle for personal and collective reflection..”

You are cordially invited to join us on Saturday, May 11th, from 4 pm to 8 pm, for the opening reception of Emma Black's tremendous debut US solo exhibition, "**Sweet Surrender**", at Ryan Joseph Gallery.

The exhibition will be on view from Saturday, May 11th to Saturday, May 4th. For more information on this exhibition or to request a collector's catalog, please contact gallery Director Ryan Connell at info@ryanjosephgallery.com

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