

I Know You Got Soul

Press Release

ARNDT Singapore is pleased to present a group exhibition entitled, "I Know You Got Soul", featuring new works by a selection of American contemporary artists that include: Phoebe Collings-James, Liam Everett, Amy Feldman, JPW3, Kika Karadi, Hugo McCloud, Joshua Nathanson, Leif Ritchey, Diego Singh, Travess Smalley and Jeff Zilm. "I Know You Got Soul" draws inspiration from a 1987 song of the same name by Eric B. and Rakim. Listed as one of Rolling Stone's 50 Greatest Hip Hop Songs of All Time, many critics consider the song to be as relevant now as it was in the 80s. Through this exhibition, curator Amir Shariat locates parallels within music – specifically rap and hip hop – and contemporary art. Whether it is by way of medium, support or subject, the works shown within this exhibition are aesthetically current, yet possess certain qualities that transcend time. Despite being as visually diverse as the artists behind them, the unifying elements of each work lie in the passion, effort, and soul derived from their creations.

According to Shariat, "The selection of artists within this exhibition is testament to the diversity of American contemporary art. The majority of the artists are based in Los Angeles and New York – the two true capitals of contemporary American art. East Coast vs. West Coast was the lightning rod of rap music during its first two decades, with the feud coming to a head in the 1990s between The Notorious B.I.G. and 2Pac. The East Coast / West Coast rivalry is a mainstay of contemporary art in America. Yet other creative hotspots are emerging, such as Dallas, Chicago, San Francisco and Miami. I pass the baton on to the young contemporary painters in this show. Let's see who can challenge our senses now, or, as Ice Cube said, "Who's the Mack?"

Amy Feldman, Joshua Nathanson, and Leif Ritchey employ a seemingly traditional approach to acrylic on canvas; however, the variances are perceptible within the motifs and styles through which they present their works. While Feldman paints large-scale gray forms that allow the viewer's mind to connect with psychologically charged imagery, Ritchey flirts with abstraction in order to represent a mood, rather than a reality. Contrary to the works by these two artists, the content within Joshua Nathanson's paintings is easily recognizable. Depicting feminine and masculine silhouettes in different surroundings, Nathanson's style nevertheless diverges from traditional representation; flat compositions that embody a restrained use of linework suffice to generate his characters.

Travess Smalley, Hugo McCloud, JPW3, Jeff Zilm and Liam Everett have all turned to unconventional substances to create their works. JPW3 creates his works out of wax,

playing with its plasticity, while Zilm uses a collection of 16 and 35mm films as his base material. With the help of detergent, Zilm strips the emulsion off the film, mixes it with acrylic paint and then sprays and brushes it onto his canvases. To produce Everett's piece *Untitled (Trieste)*, the artist combined acrylic, enamel, alcohol and salt. Physically engaged during the production process, Everett aims to reflect his labor-intensive methods in his works rather than by abstraction. In the same vein, Hugo McCloud creates nonfigurative paintings by fusing unconventional industrial materials, such as rust metal pigment and liquid tar. With a background in industrial design, he pushes the boundaries and aesthetics of utilitarian materials.

Although the artists mentioned above use ordinary supports, such as canvas, paper or linen, Travess Smalley exchanges these for stretched vinyl over aluminium frames. After printing digital patterns on different types of paper, Smalley lays them on top of one another and scans them before manipulating the images in Photoshop. The resultant images are then enlarged to UV prints on vinyl.

Phoebe Collings-James' and Kika Karadi's pieces are created from oil paint; however, their uses of the medium are rather unusual. With her feet as the application tool, Collings-James dances on the canvas in thick black oil paint; the finished work thus stands as a remnant of this process. Similarly, Karadi also employs oil paint, but builds the composition first with masking tape and black oil paint on glass, thereafter cutting out shapes and removing the tape before transferring the wet paint to linen. In both of these artists' practices, the focus dwells as much in the method as the result of painting.

By combining a range of artists who surpass the boundaries imposed by either the support or the media, "I Know You Got Soul" offers an American perspective on contemporary art to a Southeast Asian audience.

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