

Tache presents Estelle Simpson's *Révérance*, curated by Catherine Li. Simpson sets her first solo exhibition in an otherworld of her own making—someplace between performance and secrecy, theatricality and domesticity, charm and menace. Subjects human, animal and object are neatly arranged in tense proximity, with the familiar held at a distance and the uncanny pushed toward the surface. Tying these compositions together is the treatment—considered, devotional, particular—they receive from their painter, and from which the exhibition takes its name.

In smooth, careful oils, Simpson shifts between scales—intimate studies sit alongside figures portraited in life size. Her process is intentionally internal, with sitters, life models and photographs eschewed to paint entirely from her mind's eye. Under Simpson's delicate brush, human, animal and object are at once alive: curtains bristle in windowless rooms; the scarlet velvets of an armchair breathe as deeply as the girls hunched atop their cushions. Drawing from the rich histories of Surrealist and Symbolist art, and that of balletic performance, Simpson treats everyday minutiae with theatrical reverence. A kitten's paw, a compact mirror, an untied bow: we glimpse motifs as they slide side of stage, only to reappear on another canvas; costume-changed and dancing a new routine. With slender crops and flickering spotlights, Simpson's compositions restage the pleasures and struggles we once thought we knew.

Images, here, lull with a cosmetic whimsicality: Simpson recites pretty things faithfully, reverentially, after all. Between the layers of these compositions, though, even the steadiest rhythms falter quickly. Beautiful surfaces—flushed skin, glinting mirrors, satins—are rendered with a translucency that betray their function: a thin veil for the tragedy that twists beneath. A purple curtain is installed to underline the expression of drapery in Simpson's compositions. Its traditional functionality is hollowed and it instead imposes a heavy threshold between the homely and the staged; a partial concealment of the gallery's townhouse architecture.

As Li details in her exhibition essay,

*"Simpson paints exclusively interior scenes that, initially, appear ordinary—classical spaces that feel close to domestic life. We are invited, welcomed, into these rooms by familiar embellishments: armchairs, curtains, tiles, cushions, frills. These elements function both practically and rhetorically, forming part of a visual script that gestures toward multiple, unfinished narratives. But the presence of the protagonist unsettles this familiarity; a sense of stability and calm is quietly disrupted. Her gestures trouble the illusion and, all of a sudden, cast everything into absurdity. Lavish costumes, sentimental expressions, and prop-like objects blur the line between domestic space and theatrical stage, refusing any fixed perception of time or place. With coherence and realism stripped away, the expression of non-sense prevails. No single element is entirely readable—not the set design, her makeup, her costume, nor her expression or body language."*

Estelle Simpson (b. 2001, Leeds) is a painter, writer and curator who lives and works in South London. Simpson graduated from Camberwell College of Arts, London, in 2023, and was selected for that year's inaugural New Blood Emerging Art Prize showcase at Saatchi Gallery. She has since exhibited across the capital, including at Norito Gallery, Outhouse Gallery and Southwark Park Galleries. Simpson is co-founder of the curatorial collective Disrupting Mythologies, whose projects include *HEIST* at SET Woolwich, and has recently released her first publication in collaboration with South London art bookmakers Shoe Box.

Catherine Li is a London-based curator whose practice centres on site-specific exhibition, participatory art, and digital archiving. Her work approaches curating as a way to contribute to cultural creation and open up space for reflection and exchange, with exhibition as platform for innovation and research. Since obtaining her Master's in Culture, Criticism, and Curation from Central Saint Martins, Li has worked with the Austrian Cultural Forum London, Peckham Levels and the Bomb Factory Art Foundation amongst other organisations.