



Lily Lewis, *Gene I*, 2021. Graphite on paper and oil on glass in custom built and designed frame, 224.4 x 183.8 cm, with frame

ARTIST ROOM

LILY LEWIS

Commencing
August 2021

Curated by Marisa Bellani

The Columbia

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INTRODUCTION

Commencing August 2021, curated by Marisa Bellani, The Columbia is pleased to present 'Safe Places', a presentation showcasing the works by British artist Lily Lewis in the Artist Room. The display comprises six figurative surrealist works, showcasing vignettes of actors and actresses faces from the Golden Age of Hollywood cinema, between the 20s to the 50s.

This specific period stands as the first time in which perfection and the projection of an ideal had been manufactured and produced for mass consumption, particularly on a global scale and of a decidedly white middle class American flavour. Whilst beauty standards had existed before, they had not existed with a specific ideal propagated so successfully through film distribution networks globally.



Lily Lewis, *Gene II*, 2021. Graphite on paper and oil on glass in custom built and designed frame, 132.8 x 161.6 cm, with frame

Actors would sign contracts with studios for anything up to 20 years, and in doing so, would lose their identities; signing away the rights to their names, pasts, faces, public image and fragile, fallible humanity in return for being recreated as icons. To be close enough to worship, by an audience which demanded their deities stayed their idea of ideal. The natural progression of this has resulted in our relationship with our own image as projected through social media today.

During the first national lockdown London last year, Lily Lewis began researching the lives of actors who worked in the film industry during the Golden Age, to uncover the real events that happened behind the facades of the 'names' and 'faces' she had grown up with. Lewis presents these actors hand-drawn using graphite on paper in order to draw focus to the different lines and shapes unique to the actors faces.



Lily Lewis, *Constance*, 2021. Graphite on paper and oil on glass in custom built and designed frame, 132.8 x 161.6 cm, with frame

Lewis' choice of colour specifically embraces makeup pigments fused with oil paint, structurally applied onto the inside of glass to intentionally separate the colour from paper. This structural resonance allows for shadows to be projected and converse between the paper on the canvas and paint on glass. This structural form transcends the typical flatness which exists on paper, allowing for the works to become sculptural objects.

As a result of her research, Lewis selects and showcases actors who were victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault, racism or homophobia at the time; some experience fragile and tragic stories of life, some of triumph, some of tragedy played out within the constructs of socially prescribed circumstance.

The inclusions of both genders constitute an importance to the visual narrative of the show. When an individual wears armour, it displays a show of strength, however, it also comes to question their vulnerability and weaknesses.



Lily Lewis, *Sydney*, 2021. Graphite on paper and oil on glass in custom built and designed frame, 132.8 x 161.6 cm, with frame

As a body of work 'Safe Places' discusses the concept of the façade; is it strength, vulnerability or weakness? The works explore the difference in stigma between these two and its reception when displayed on men and women. Vulnerability as a feminine attribute demands protection and safeguarding, evoking the idea that women need to be controlled. Whilst vulnerability when ascribed to men, demonstrates a failing of strength and a derivation of the masculine identity. When a woman wears makeup, it is attractive and normative, whilst a man wearing make-up is ridiculed or vilified, or at the very least, the eye identifies it as anomalous. The display plays on, as does the artist's body work, questions of adulthood, and what that means, the projection of self and its reception.



Lily Lewis, *Gary*, 2021. Graphite on paper and oil on glass in custom built and designed frame, 224.4 x 183.8 cm, with frame



Lily Lewis, *Alan*, 2021. Graphite on paper and oil on glass in custom built and designed frame, 70 x 50 cm, with frame



Detail of Lily Lewis, *Alan*, 2021. Graphite on paper and oil on glass in custom built and designed frame, 70 x 50 cm, with frame

ABOUT THE ARTIST

Lily Lewis is a British multidisciplinary artist whose work spans paintings, drawings, sculptures and mixed media. Lewis has completed degrees in both English Literature and Psychoanalysis, which aid in her practice of understanding and deconstructing the narrative of human experience within a geometric framework.

Drawing her inspiration from studying human connections, experience and interaction in the world, Lewis utilises pattern making and abstraction, to produce paintings and works on paper that deliberately allow for discussions on the development of socialisation and communication. Lewis aims to provide a thematic structure of how the body is perceived in its natural environment and explores how the human eye defines and shapes our experiences, emotions and memories.

Lily Lewis' recent solo and group exhibitions include: *The Dream of the Fisherman's Wife*, Ruttkowski68, Paris (2021); *Safe Places*, Carriage Hall, London (2021); *There's No Such Thing As Grown Ups*, Schleiffer Art, London (2020); *Nightingale Collective*, The Painting Rooms, London (2019).



ABOUT THE ARTIST ROOM

The Artist Room is a newly launched space at The Columbia, which combines relaxed hospitality and emerging artistry. An intimate, elegant and natural light-filled lounge bar, it provides a unique platform for artists to showcase their work outside of the traditional gallery space, with all purchases supporting the artists and the ongoing arts programmes at The Columbia. The Artist Room showcases the works of a rotating artists in focus and each presentation will be accompanied by a digital catalogue, which will include a selection of images and informative texts about the artists and their practice. The Artist Room displays will be changed on a quarterly basis, instigating a dynamic and ongoing programme of emerging artistic talent.

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Come see us:
The Columbia



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