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TAHNEE LONSDALE

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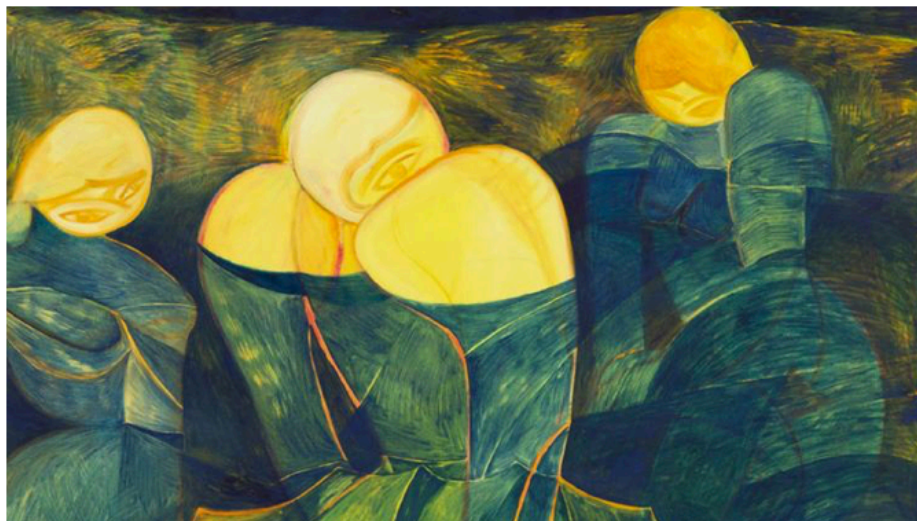
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Tahnee Lonsdale: Under the Shell

In this solo exhibition, Tahnee Lonsdale presents 12 large oil paintings, produced this year, that provide a meditative and emotive space in which to consider embodiment, togetherness and loss



Tahnee Lonsdale. Under The Shell, 2021. Oil on canvas. 55 x 50 in. © the artist. Courtesy of Cob Gallery

Cob Gallery, London

27 May – 26 June 2021

by CHRISTIANA SPENS

At first glance, Tahnee Lonsdale's figures, emerging and overlapping throughout these large, square canvases, seem to hide from view, yet their presence, their heavy emotional lives and social interactions, are mesmerising. They possess a hypnotic quality and I find myself drawn into the depictions of entangled limbs. Seeming fluid and layered as pools of water, each painting encourages a dwelling – in the deep shades themselves, and the complex puzzle of mannerisms, poses and coalescence that they both reveal and hide from view.

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Tahnee Lonsdale. *Ancestors*, 2021. Oil on canvas. 55 x 50 in. © the artist. Courtesy of Cob Gallery

In *I Love You No Matter What*, for instance, three (or perhaps four) blue figures overlap to create one weeping whole – at least, that is my first impression. With a small bunch of flowers, and the melancholy of the blue, it would seem that this is some sort of mourning scene. And yet, what could be a tissue held by the central figure could also be a baby. Are they mourning or nurturing? Are they swimming between these places in the life cycle? There is a spiritual dynamic to the three central figures, too; they resemble the holy trinity, in a way, but also the figures beneath the crucifixion; either way, there is a transcendental aura, or echo, in this composition, though it is stylised and simplified in a refreshing palette, and with lines that recall Matisse and Picasso, rather than more overt art historical or religious iconography.

In the same room, two other paintings complement this painting in their palette and style – *Ancestors* and *Family Dynamics*. The first seems to show the elaborate shapes of medieval gowns, with billowing sleeves and skirts, although painted with such a degree of abstraction that any specific time is never certain. These bodies are also seemingly headless, or faceless, so they emerge as ghosts or shadows, blending into one another to create an intimidating group of arched, overlapping figures. In *Family Dynamics*, similar figures seem to drag one another down into a chaotic mass of limbs, or shadows, collapsing into one another. My six-year-old said they reminded him of the game *Twister*, while, for me, there is a sense of being drawn downwards, into a sort of underworld; these figures become a river, or pool, in their uncanny fluidity.

In the Cob Gallery's larger room, the paintings are less melancholic, but retain this mesmerising style and complex emotional space and experimentation. Here, too, the careful layering of blocks of colour, using a minimal palette, resembles the techniques of screen printing to a degree, creating depths of colour that encourage a reflective, meditative interaction.



Tahnee Lonsdale. *Under The Shell*, 2021. Oil on canvas. 55 x 50 in. © the artist. Courtesy of Cob Gallery

In *Under The Shell*, from which the exhibition takes its title, Lonsdale recalls Botticelli's *Birth of Venus* (1486) – in particular, the feminine shapes and style. The muted greens and pale yellows of Botticelli's painting are also referenced, though in deeper, more vivid shades. Nevertheless, his painting echoes through this piece, creating a fantastical and dream-like space. Subtly, Lonsdale reveals the ways in which our own imaginations and reference points are conditioned by this historical inter-visibility; we recall images, symbols and icons from the past, often without realising.

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Tahnee Lonsdale. *Bath My Weary Limbs*, 2021. Oil on canvas. 55 x 50 in. © the artist. Courtesy of Cob Gallery

In *Bath My Weary Limbs*, in which a figure is partially entwined and concealed by palm-like shapes, in a peach pink and almost dark turquoise blue, there is again a sense of falling, and landing – and yet, it is a soft landing. The feeling of weariness, and languishing, is pertinent, but any anxiousness and darkness is offset by nurturing colours and shapes; it is as if the painting holds the figure, or the feeling, and relieves it of its interior tension. Here, as in the other paintings, there is a sense of healing and imminent resurrection after a fall or a break; the figures drown, but they are nurtured on the seabed. There is a softness to the melancholy, and hope within the mourning and drowning implicit in these scenes.



Tahnee Lonsdale. *I Love You No Matter What*, 2021. Oil on canvas. 70 x 64 in. © the artist. Courtesy of Cob Gallery

The idea of coalescence and communality is particularly striking, throughout this body of work. In each painting, limbs are entwined, and they at once pull one another down and rescue or console one another. This speaks poignantly to the current time, in which we become aware of the commonality of a strange, isolated and yet social trauma, as we attempt to move out of it. Mourning and yet moving, accepting shared pasts and visual languages, and yet speaking to otherwise abstract and ambiguous emotions, Lonsdale's paintings capture what it is to attempt to recover, and to realise the commonality necessary to that moving on. Even as these figures drown and collapse, they are reborn, these souls nurtured on the seabed.



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01/06/2021



5 Artists on Our Radar This June

● Artsy Curatorial and Artsy Editorial Jun 1, 2021 4:51pm   

“Artists on Our Radar” is a monthly series produced collaboratively by Artsy’s Editorial and Curatorial teams. Utilizing our art expertise and access to Artsy data, each month, we highlight five artists who have our attention. To make our selections, we’ve determined which artists made an impact this past month through new gallery representation, exhibitions, auctions, art fairs, or fresh works on Artsy.

Tahnee Lonsdale

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B. 1982, Rogate, England. Lives and works in Los Angeles.

Tahnee Lonsdale has been very busy this spring. On the heels of a splashy solo debut in Asia at Hong Kong’s Mine Project, Lonsdale turned heads at Frieze New York in May, exhibiting with [Night Gallery](#). And just last week, she opened a new solo show, “[Under The Shell](#),” at [Cob](#) in London, where she’s also featured in a group show at [PM/AM](#). With yet another solo exhibition at Night Gallery slated for 2022, calling this Lonsdale’s “breakout moment” just doesn’t seem to suffice.

Lonsdale creates rich, jewel-toned color fields bisected by elongated figures with sweeping limbs that appear to embrace, wrestle, and offer comfort—at times, all in the space of one painting. A graduate of London’s Byam Shaw School of Art, Lonsdale represents a new guard of emerging artists fusing figurative painting with principles of abstraction, calling to mind the work of rising artists like [Christina Quarles](#), [Melike Kara](#), and [Genesis Tramine](#).

Water is a recurring motif in Lonsdale’s work, representing a dual force of calm and danger. Suspended in liquid, the figures populating her canvas oscillate between inhabiting a blissful, womblike space, or a stifling, sinister environment.

—Jordan Huelskamp ●

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TREBUCHET MAGAZINE

26/05/2021

TREBUCHET

Millie Walton | 26/05/2021 | Art, Features

Tahnee Lonsdale: Painting Vulnerability

Millie Walton speaks to British painter Tahnee Lonsdale about her current solo exhibition at Cob Gallery in London

Wide, feminine figures overlap, washed with colour, into a tangle of limbs. Tahnee Lonsdale's paintings are portraits of the artist's emotional states and explorations of contemporary female identity, straddling the space between abstraction and figuration.

As the British artist's solo exhibition opens at Cob Gallery in London, she discusses her painting process, the inspiration of Botticelli and trusting her intuition

Tell us about the exhibition's title *Under the Shell* and how it fits with the broader themes of the exhibition?

I'm searching for that soft spot just beneath the shell. The vulnerability beneath the armour – where we are our most authentic. There was a moment when I was looking through a Botticelli book in my studio one day and the page fell on *Birth of Venus*, it was a sort of moment of alignment. It made sense. Venus, the archetypal divine feminine, drifting to shore on her clam shell. She is that soft spot. She ties it all together.



Tahnee Lonsdale, *Under the Shell*, 2021 © the artist, courtesy of Cob Gallery

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TREBUCHET MAGAZINE

26/05/2021

Water seems to have a strong presence in this latest body of work. Is it an element that you've always been drawn to and what does it symbolise for you in these paintings?

The presence of water in my work is quite new. I live near the ocean and it is my place of healing, but also, a place to hide. When you sink beneath your bath waters you can no longer hear the world. Just a dull echo. A feeling of distance descends.

Your use of colour is very striking and seems to evoke distinct emotional atmospheres. What guides your palette?

My use of colour is pretty intuitive. I work around a base colour which instructs me where to go next. I started using a lot of blue recently because I was given a tube of phathlo by a friend. It was a chance encounter that turned out well. I've heard blue relates to your throat chakra, which is funny, because I do feel like I'm finding my voice.

What appeals to you about oil paint? Has your relationship to the material changed over the years?

The smell, the greasiness. Being able to leave my brushes unwashed for months and tubes without the lids on.

I'm not sure about my relationship [to the material], but my process has changed, and my paint application. I feel like I scrub the paint on now. Almost like I'm scratching something away to reveal the image. My process now is quite specific. There is a slow building of layers, with paint laid sparingly at first. This is how I find my composition – like a tentative interrogation of the canvas.

Your work has sometimes been described as 'semi-abstract'. In your opinion, does that definition accurately represent your artistic aims?

Yes, I suppose. Although I don't really have artistic aims. My work falls neither into abstract or realism. It's in the large chasm between. I guess abstract figurative would be more precise, but it's changing constantly, and at the moment, it feels less abstract and more figurative. Maybe this will change. I never really know what's coming next.

How did the unique shape of your figures evolve?

I always looked outside of myself to figure myself out, which was reflected in how I found my figures, but recently my process has been outside-in. The figures emerge from a state of mind, an intuitive buckling up and deep diving.

In these latest works, your figures appear in groups, overlapping limbs or holding onto one another. Why was it important for you to depict physical connection?

The figures in my most recent body of work appear to depict multiple characters, and this sometimes feels valid to me, but really they are the same person, split into varying states of awareness, creating a whole.

Are there any artists who've had particular influence on your practice?

Louise Bourgeois, Deibenkorn, Guston, Maria Lassnig, Henry Moore, Picasso, Matisse, John Everett Millais.

What's next for you?

Lots. It's turning out to be a busy 2021!

"Under the Shell: Tahnee Lonsdale" runs until 26 June 2021 at Cob Gallery, 205 Royal College Street, London. For more information, visit: cobgallery.com

Featured image: Tahnee Lonsdale, *Ancestors*, 2021 © the artist, courtesy of Cob Gallery