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Matilda Sutton

*Bristling*

11 January - 24 February, 2024



*Conspirators, 2023*

Working between painting, drawing, textile and sculpture, Matilda Sutton weaves together narrative through image and object. Her solo exhibition *Bristling* brings together a new body of work which expands on a core impulse in Sutton's practice; to investigate the boundaries of the body and the self. Rooted in both archetypal, cultural narratives, personal experience and embodiment, the imagery across Sutton's work features beings somewhere between humanness and animalness. These images of fraught solitude and complex intimacy through means of story and object, attempt to express the tensions between individuality and connectedness, dependence and independence.

In Sutton's paintings and drawings, creatures engage in actions and glances that are born from questions raised in searching the faulty borders of the body, identity and self. They seem to ask how we conceive of our wholeness, or lack thereof, and negotiate our edges. Painted on paper in a material attempt to dissolve categorical ways of seeing, Sutton's 'people-creatures' move away from their solitary activities into relation with each other. Sometimes interactions are focalised, other times one individual interrupts the other, hovering in the periphery and only half in the frame.

The sculptures which Sutton refers to as 'Poppets', are made from plaster, recycled packaging, skewers, air dry clay, cloth and paint. They appear as cone-like, totemic figures tottering on spindly legs with painted or sculpted faces that are uniquely made to mark the oddness of ourselves as individuals. Each has a particular outfit, contrasting heavy wool suiting with sheer muslin and rough linen, they wear cloaks and bonnets, smocks and skirts. For Sutton, the 'Poppets' enable us to feel our way around the shapes of ourselves. They are a learning tool, a way to play and understand which historically has been one of the earliest assertions of self.

The questioning of binary systems and conceptual dualisms is central to Sutton's practice which takes 'gender' and 'species' in its hands to prod and poke. Here the story can be both content and method. Taking symbols as tools, Sutton begins a way of finding, charting a journey through the dark and the misty places in between.

Matilda Sutton (1994) is based in Newcastle upon Tyne. She graduated from Newcastle University in 2019 and participated in The NewBridge Project Collective Studio programme 2020-21. Sutton recently had a solo exhibition at Vane, Gateshead, UK (2023) and Clifford Chance, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK (2023). Vane presented a solo booth of Sutton's work at British Art Fair, Saatchi Gallery, London (2023). Group exhibitions include Newcastle Contemporary Arts (2023), Vane, Gateshead, UK (2022 and 2021); Turner Contemporary, Margate, UK (2022); Quench, Margate, UK (2022) and BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, UK (2021).

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35 Eastcastle St  
London, W1W 8DW  
Press and General Inquiries:  
[info@pipelinecontemporary.com](mailto:info@pipelinecontemporary.com)  
+44 77241456 48