

ANWEN KEELING

The Blue Room

5 – 31 July 2014



Liverpool Street Gallery is delighted to announce Anwen Keeling's long anticipated solo exhibition, *The Blue Room*, on view from 5 – 31 July 2014, opening Thursday 10 July 2014, 6-8pm. Following the success of her 2010 suite of elite sporthorse portraits, Keeling has chosen to return to the subject and form of the female nude, imbuing the work with her characteristic chiaroscuro effects.

Keeling's realist paintings capture evocative moments in fictional lives with a reverence for poignancy, innocence and elegance. As an accomplished technician (with both camera and brush), Keeling's genre of heightened realism reveals an adept skill in truthfully depicting the body in space through the use of linear perspective, velvety colour and tight compositions.

Keeling stages her narrative by first photographing and sketching her models in a domestic setting. Each painting's scene in *The Blue Room* suite unfolds in the same blue room. The photography is integral to her working process as it captures fleeting moments of light and shadow. Keeling then skillfully employs rich pigments and layers of thin glazes to create her precise paintings. Gillian Serisier aptly states in her 2014 catalogue essay:

"Painting with oil on Belgian linen, Keeling is enamoured by the act of painting... she nurtures paint's ability to describe light through the glowing layers of transparent colour that shimmer within the rich lead white, umbers and ultramarine of her palette." (Gillian Serisier, *The Blue Room*, 2014)

Despite the painting's almost photo-realist appearance, Keeling never denies the surface's painterly quality whereby the brushwork and the thin layering of oil and varnish still remain present.

The suite of paintings in *The Blue Room* moves away from evoking a drama reminiscent of Hitchcock and film noir, and focuses on the atmosphere that light and shadow play in transforming the pose of the female nude. Titles, such as *Swathe*, *Enfold* and *Embrace*, suggest the interplay between the light source and the varied poses and angles of the sitter. In *Embrace*, the strong light through window shutters falls across the model. As the model embraces her legs, the light source mimics this embrace, caressing the sun on her back. An atmosphere of intimacy and vulnerability are captured. As the viewer, we are witness to a private experience, viewing the female in a moment of contemplation, never able to enter the space of the personal.

"The work of Anwen Keeling is defined by feminine beauty. It is a world of soft tones, gentle curves and reposed thought. Light plays across a form as a liquid element caressing and defining its own

trajectory insensible to pattern and mood. The woman herself: young; beautiful; supple is defined by form.” (Gillian Serisier, *The Blue Room*, 2014)

Inspired by painters including Caravaggio, Vermeer, Edward Hopper, Michaël Borremans, Eric Fischl, Lucian Freud, and photographers Jeff Wall and Bill Henson, Keeling also finds inspiration from her extensive collection of art and film publications. She states: “Hitchcock has been a long standing favourite, because of the simplicity and strength of the framing of his scenes and the use of the single light source.” (Anwen Keeling, 2007)

QUOTE SELECTION

“The seductive paintings evoke intrigue, drama, lust and betrayal.” (Jeanne Carey, “Culturati”, *Lifestyle & Culture, Harper’s Bazaar*, May 2009, p98)

“The technical process of painting is extremely important to me, as I investigate the material qualities (and possibilities) of paint... I never deny it is a painted surface, the glazing and brush marks are still evident and important.” (Anwen Keeling in conversation with Alison Duthie, “Equestrian Artists”, *Equestrian Life*, August-September 2011, p70)

“With their distinctive play of liquid shadow and baroque touches of colour, Keeling’s ambiguous images channel crime fiction and film noir. Recalling Raymond Chandler’s stories of desire and intrigue, and Alfred Hitchcock’s cinema of sexual tension, the women and men face or evade each other according to various archetypal romantic scenarios.” (Kate Sands, “Shadow of a Doubt”, *Liverpool Street Gallery*, 2009)

BIOGRAPHY

Anwen Keeling (b.1976, Sydney) completed a Bachelor of Fine Arts (First Class Honours) at the Australian National University, Canberra (1998) and was awarded the University Medal. Keeling continued her studies, completing a Masters of Art (European Fine Art) from the Winchester School of Art, South Hampton University, Barcelona, Spain (2001). She has been a regular participant in group exhibitions and prizes. Her paintings have been selected for *The Year in Art* (2003), and the *Salon des Refusés* (2004) at the SH Ervin Gallery, The National Trust, Sydney. The portrait of the Sydney radio hosts Merrick Watts and Tim Ross (‘Merrick and Rosso’) was exhibited in the *Doug Moran National Portrait Prize* (2004) at the State Library of New South Wales. She was awarded the *ABN AMRO Emerging Artist Award (Employee’s Choice)* (2007) for her painting, *Marnie*, and was selected as finalist in the *Sulman Prize* (2010) at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, and once again in 2011 for her painting of the elite sport horse *Copabella Visage*. In late 2010, Keeling was commissioned by the University of Notre Dame to paint the Chancellor – His Eminence Cardinal Pell, the Honourable John Howard and the Vice Chancellor Emeritus Professor Peter Tannock. Keeling’s work is represented in the collections of the National Australia Bank and the Australian National University, Canberra, regional galleries including Tweed River Regional Art Gallery and the Gold Coast City Art Gallery, as well as private collections in Australia, the United States of America, Hong Kong and the United Kingdom.

Anwen Keeling lives and works in Sydney and is a casual lecturer in painting and life drawing at The College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales and The National Art School, Sydney.

IMAGES

Embrace, 2014, oil on linen, 78 x 102 cm

Entwine, 2014, oil on linen, 78 x 102 cm

Photography: Michel Brouet, Sydney

Images courtesy the artist and Liverpool Street Gallery, Sydney.

For further information about the artist and exhibition, or if you require high resolution images, please contact Liverpool Street Gallery on 02 8353 7799 or info@liverpoolstgallery.com.au