



*What Mad Pursuit*  
20 April - 20 May 2023

Berntson Bhattacharjee is delighted to present 'What Mad Pursuit', Georg Wilson's debut solo exhibition in London. The exhibition will mark the opening of the gallery's first permanent location in London, on Berners Street in Fitzrovia.

Wilson's practice is directed by the cyclical change of the English seasons. Her paintings conjure peculiar stories, woven out of ancient and contemporary folkloric customs from across the calendar year, from equinox to equinox. This body of work was created for this time of year and the arrival of spring. The work draws inspiration from the folklore of matchmaking customs, love songs and literature ranging from pre-Christian culture to 16th century England. Wilson's paintings evoke her own strange narratives out of this research, striking a delicate tension between intimacy and violence, between something soft and warm, and tooth and claw.

The pagan festival of Imbolc was an important inspiration to this exhibition. Argued by many to etymologically derive from the bodily Old Irish term 'imbolc', meaning 'in the belly', the festival falls during the time of year when each creature in nature is seeking a mate. This is a competitive and potentially violent time of year in nature. Imbolc was traditionally a festival of light, candles and bonfires, during the early months of the year, before spring comes. A time of cold and darkness, looking towards the light, when life is writhing below the surface, itching to burst through the soil. The time when the blackbird opens his bill, and begins to craft a nest. Crowns of candles, matches flaring in the night, and the pale glint of small moons in Wilson's work illuminate her narratives.

Chivalric poetry and Tudor courtship rituals also form significant inspiration to the exhibition. Poets such as Thomas Wyatt in England's 16th century court frequently likened the hunt for love to the pursuit of a deer through the forest: the thrill of the chase, the rush of blood, ending in triumph or disappointment. Wilson's work seeks to draw on these poems' mischievous layers of subtext. Each painting has the potential for multiple interpretations or narratives; a sly eye here, an outstretched finger there.

Art historical references emerge frequently in Wilson's work. Lucas Cranach the Elder (1472 - 1553) is an ongoing inspiration to the artist, particularly in his luminescent paintings on panel, in which nude bodies glow against black. In contrast to Cranach's idealised female Venuses, Wilson's characters are more creaturely than any gender, lending them an autonomy and weight that is clearly *not* laid out for the pleasure of the viewer. Hairy, clawed bodies, with deep, dark, animal eyes loom out of the twilight and then slink away into the night.

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The exhibition brings together an expansive body of work, including Wilson's largest paintings to date and an accompanying limited edition book. Paintings on both canvas and panel will be shown in the main gallery space, with an intimate display of drawings downstairs.

### About the artist

Georg Wilson is a London-based painter and the co-founder of artist-led All Mouth Gallery. She received her BA in Art History at the University of Oxford (2020) and MA in Painting at the Royal College of Art (2022).

Solo exhibitions include; 'Ill Met by Moonlight', online with Delphian Gallery & Artsy New York (2023); 'This Other Eden', Kravets Wehby Gallery, New York (2022); 'The Garden Thief', Arusha Gallery, Bruton (2022). Recent group exhibitions include; 'Who Is Your Master?', 1969 Gallery, New York (2023); 'We Are Floating In Space', Newlyn Art Gallery, Cornwall (2023); 'Pocket Universe', Philip Martin Gallery, LA (2023); 'Even the Worm Will Turn' duo show, Soho Revue, London (2022); 'The Red Room', Berntson Bhattacharjee, Cromwell Place, London (2022); 'AMPHIBIAN' supported by Hannah Barry Gallery, London (2022); Ingram Prize Show, London (2022). She is a twice-recipient of the Elizabeth Greenshields award (2021-2), and Ingram Prize Finalist (2022).

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