

Touch-A-Touch-A-Touch-A-Touch Me

5 October - 11 November 2023

Private View: 4 October, 6 - 8 PM

Berntson Bhattacharjee is delighted to present *Touch-A-Touch-A-Touch-A-Touch Me*, a group show that harnesses the enigmatic spirit of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* as its muse, delving into the profound thematic tapestry woven by this timeless theatrical masterpiece and the 1975 cinematic sensation. This exhibition showcases new works from a cohort of nine artists who explore the intersections of sexuality, identity and the interplay between horror and humour. Exhibited is a captivating display of works by Max Boyla, Ebru Duruman, Ebba Granh, Preslav Kostov, Rosie Reed, Sophie Ruigrok, Aisté Stancikaitė, Olivia Sterling, and Xu Yang.



(L-R: Xu Yang, *The Map*, 2023, oil on linen, 200 x 170 cm; Sophie Ruigrok, *Plaster people*, 2023, Soft pastel on sanded card, 65 x 47 cm)

At its core, *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* champions radical self-acceptance through a captivating blend of Sci-Fi, camp, and rock and roll, provoking viewers to confront their desires, lusts, and the absurdity of societal ridicule. Through its vivid portrayal of sexuality and alienation, the film becomes a canvas for unbridled expression and metamorphosis, where characters and viewers alike navigate a transformative journey, ultimately celebrating the power of liberation and self-discovery. Almost 50 years since its release, the cinematic sensation continues to inspire cult followers and artists alike by serving as a symbol of liberation, gender fluidity, and the subversion of societal norms, fostering a creative space for diverse and boundary-pushing expressions.

Exhibiting artists have each chosen a character, scene, song lyric, or broader theme from the story as a basis for crafting their distinctive interpretations in the form of new works for the exhibition. *Touch-A-Touch-A-Touch-A-Touch Me* is a celebration of artists who boldly challenge conventions, express their sexuality, speak of despair, and present their audience with provocative and unsettling themes. Exhibiting artists

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explore complex ideas surrounding queerness, otherness, melancholy, and opulence through visually captivating artistic expressions.



(L-R: Preslav Kostov, Shut-eye, 2023, oil on canvas, 50 x 65 cm; Preslav Kostov, Corner, 2023, oil on canvas, 120 x 150 cm; Xu Yang, Nothing is Imaginary, 2023, oil on linen, 95 x 85 cm)

Artists draw from the vibrant colour palette of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, capture the film's surreal essence, and freeze scenes in time. Aesthetically, exhibited works mirror the *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*'s exuberance, effervescence and saturated visuals. Delving into the film's dichotomous themes of desire, liberation, and rebellion, *Touch-A-Touch-A-Touch-A-Touch Me* presents a visually stunning and emotionally charged presentation of works that pay homage to the enduring cult classic.

About the artists

Max Boyla (b. 1991) is an artist based in London, where he graduated from the Royal Academy Schools in 2023. Recent group shows include; *Royal Academy Schools Show*, Royal Academy of Art, London (2023); *Add More Fuel To Your Life*, Sim Smith, London (2023); *Some Kind of Delicacy*, Hello Goodbye Gallery, London (2022); *Saxifrage*, Kupfer, London (2022); *Inside Out*, The Artist Room, London (2022); *Dream Baby Dream (Paint Talk)*, The Fitzrovia Gallery, London (2022); and *Premiums Interim 1*, The Royal Academy of Arts, London (2022).

Ebru Duruman (b.1992) is a painter from Istanbul, Turkey. She completed her BFA of Fine Art at Rhode Island School of Design in Providence. Recent group shows include *Abstraction*, Taymour Grahne Projects, London (2023), *Water is Not for Sale*, Bloom Galerie, Saint-Tropez (2022) and *Golden Hour*, Bloom Galerie, Saint-Tropez (2022).

Ebba Grahm (b. 1995) is an artist from Sweden, based in London and Stockholm with a previous background in industrial and product design. She completed an MA in Sculpture at Royal College of Art, London, in 2023. Recent exhibitions

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include *Portal*, Arusha Gallery, London (2023); *MA1 Degree Show*, Royal College of Art, London, (2023); *Everything is temporary*, 3 Locks Brewery, London (2023).

Preslav Kostov (b. 1998) is a London-based painter who graduated from an MA at the Royal College of Art in 2023. Kostov completed a BA at Leeds Arts University in 2020 after studying at the Royal Drawing School until 2017. He was the recipient of The Elizabeth Greenshields Award in 2021 and 2023, and is an elected member of The Contemporary British Portrait Painters Society. Recent group exhibitions include; *From The Cloud*, Baert Gallery, Los Angeles (2023); *Skin Deep*, Studio West Gallery, London (2023); *A consciousness harnessed to flesh*, D Contemporary, London (2023); *Now introducing 2022*, Studio West Gallery, London (2022); *Proserpina*, Apiary Studios, London (2022).

Rosie Reed (b. 1991) is an artist living and working in London. She completed her BFA at The Ruskin School of Fine Art, Oxford University, in 2013 and her MFA in Sculpture at the Royal College of Art in 2017. In 2022, Reed had her first UK solo presentation, *What the Water Gave Me*, at Quench Gallery in Margate. Recent group exhibitions include *(Dis)embodied Burdens* at Cooke Latham Gallery, London (2022); *Don't Touch Me* at The Amber Room, London (2020); and *Tidy* at Sotho, Zurich (2020). Reed has also exhibited at the Barbican Arts Group Trust, Fold Gallery and Hauser & Wirth. She completed an artist residency at Palazzo Monti, Italy, in 2019.

Sophie Ruigrok (b.1992) is a London-based artist. In 2015, she received a BA in Modern Languages at University College London before completing The Drawing Year Postgraduate Programme at The Royal Drawing School in 2020. Ruigrok presented a solo exhibition, *Today I Feel Relevant and Alive*, at The Sunday Painter, London, in 2022. Recent group exhibitions include *It's Better to be Cats than to be Loved*, Tabula Rasa Gallery, London (2022); *Parallel Universe*, Bradley Ertaskiran, Montreal (2022); *Dream Baby Dream*, Fitzrovia Gallery, London (2022); *Love is the Devil: Studies after Francis Bacon*, Marlborough, London (2022); *Bloomberg New Contemporaries*, South London Gallery, London (2021); *A Grain of Sand*, The Sunday Painter, London (2021).

Aistė Stancikaitė (b. 1988) is a Lithuanian artist living in Berlin, Germany. She specialises in monochromatic drawing and painting techniques. Stancikaitė recently presented a solo exhibition, *Outlines*, at Cuturi Gallery in Singapore (2023) and is due to present a solo show at ATM Gallery in New York late 2023. Recent group exhibitions include *Beyond the Veil*, Guts Gallery, London (2023); *Daily Poison*, Better Go South, Stuttgart (2023); *FEMBOT*, The Hole, New York (2023); *Queering the Narrative*, Neuer Aachener Kunstverein, Aachen (2022); *Touch Me*, Kunstraum Potsdam Waschhaus, Potsdam (2022).

Olivia Sterling (b. 1996) is a painting and installation artist from Peterborough, living currently in London where she received her MA in Painting at the Royal College of Art. She exhibited at Art Basel with Meyer Riegger in 2023. Recent solo exhibitions include; *Dinner with a Show*, Meyer Riegger, Berlin (2022); *Manslaughter*, Guts Gallery, London (2022); *Yowl*, Nevven, Gothenburg (2022). Recent group exhibitions include; *Rage Comics*, Huxley Parlour, London (2023); *Out Here*, Steve Turner Gallery, LA (2023); *Saints and Sinners*, Guts Gallery, London (2023); *The Object Stares Back*, Tube Culture Hall, Milan (2023). Sterling has exhibited in three group exhibitions with Berntson Bhattacharjee.

Xu Yang (b. 1996) is a London-based painter born in Shandong, China. She studied Fine Art Painting at Wimbledon College of Arts (UAL) and graduated with an MA in Painting from the Royal College of Art in 2020. Yang was recently awarded a commission by Tate Collective for LGBTQIA+ history month (2023), and was the winner of Barbican Arts Group Trust Art Works Open (2019). Recent solo exhibitions include *Imagine Yourself a Warrior*, Mou Projects, Hong Kong (2023); *Therefore I am*, Dio Horia, Athens (2022); *100 Carat Diamond*, Barbican Arts Group Trust, London (2020). Recent group exhibitions include *It's my party*, Guts Gallery, London (2023); *Machines of Desire*, Simon Lee Gallery, London (2022); *Eat, Drink, Man, Women*, 180 Strand, London (2022).

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