



Coming Up Roses

Wenhui Hao, Preslav Kostov, Jemima Murphy, James Shaw and Xu Yang
13 November - 20 December

Coming Up Roses brings together five artists; Wenhui Hao, Preslav Kostov, Jemima Murphy, James Shaw and Xu Yang, in an exhibition that explores the intricate interplay of memory, emotion, and nostalgia.

Places both real and imagined; fields, trees, and pathways become vessels of collective and individual memory, where time lingers in the air and the smallest movements can stir long-buried emotions. The body, as both a witness and a keeper of these sensations, recalls the past not just through thought but through sensation, gesture, and rhythm. The exhibition invites reflection on the enduring presence of the past within us, considering how personal experience is inscribed across both the body and the natural world. In this space, nostalgia becomes tactile, etched into the earth, marked on the canvas.

The title of the exhibition signifies a difficult time passing - an emergence from the undergrowth, a tender return to light. Embodying the spirit of historical periods such as The Rococo and Baroque, the exhibition is filled with movement, expression and boldness. Paying homage to Jean-Honoré Fragonard's *The Swing* (1767 - 1768), James Shaw will present a functional swing sculpture, allowing visitors to experience and become a part of the show in a playful way. Subtly is cast aside, and in vibrant contrast to the season, the works embrace colour as a gesture of renewal and optimism.

Wenhui Hao (b. 2000), is a Chinese abstract painter who graduated from Royal College of Art in 2024. Her work merges subjective emotion with social and political concerns, emphasising the fragility, sensitivity, and spirituality of humanity. Exploring themes of female desire, bodily experience, and violence, she employs figurative and deconstructive gestures that cascade into imbalance. Hao views painting as both suturing and undoing, reflecting the complex terrain between harm and tenderness, destruction and restoration.

Preslav Kostov (b. 1998), is a London based painter and draughtsman focusing on the contemporary figure, graduating from the Royal College of Art in 2023. His practice grapples with the instability of the figure in contemporary image culture. Through accumulation, erasure, and distortion, his paintings hover between observation and invention, where bodies appear partially seen, misremembered, or withheld. Drawing on motifs of leisure and intimacy, Kostov's fractured grounds sustain ambiguity as a structural condition, opening space for affect, distance, and doubt.

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Jemima Murphy (b. 1992), graduated with an MA from City & Guilds of London Art School in 2023, and paints large-scale abstract works on canvas. Identifying her works as reimagined landscapes, she explores the physicality of paint to render emotional experience. Colour functions as her primary vocabulary - vivid, urgent, and layered in bursts of instinctive energy. Balancing opposites of light and dark, abundance and scarcity, Murphy transforms each canvas into a shifting, enigmatic space where spontaneity and order coexist in fragile equilibrium.

Xu Yang (b. 1996), a Chinese multi-disciplinary artist, now based in London and graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2020. Her practice weaves together themes of identity, sexuality, and culture. Rooted in historical excavation, she draws on Rococo aesthetics, mythology, and her Chinese heritage to construct contemporary narratives that confront both societal constructs and the complexities of human nature. Frequently inserting her own image into her works, Yang turns the act of painting into an intimate dialogue with the viewer.

James Shaw (b. 1987) is a London based designer and graduated from the Royal College of Art in 2013. As a designer his work aims to bring out the inherent beauty of diverse materials, often uniting or contrasting handmade and tactile qualities with the structured and systematised. Shaw plays with medium, and his most renowned works use recycled plastics, producing blobby, gloopy and baroque forms through a self-built extruding gun. Pastel hues and contemporary intuitive shapes transform the everyday functional furniture to the unexpected.

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