



Medium Rare

Alicja Biala, Shannon Bono, Zayn Qahtani, Tuesday Riddell,
Jessie Stevenson & Orfeo Tagiuri
20 February - 12 April

Berntson Bhattacharjee is proud to present the group show, *Medium Rare*. The exhibition is a textural exploration into the depth of organic materials used in contemporary making. Bringing together six artists with a deeply rooted commitment to material, the show presents; Alicja Biala, Shannon Bono, Zayn Qahtani, Tuesday Riddell, Jessie Stevenson & Orfeo Tagiuri. The works play with themes of tradition, craft and timeless processes, oscillating between painting and sculpture.

Alicja Biała (b. 1993, Poznań, Poland) is a multidisciplinary and multimedia artist based between Poland, the Netherlands, and the UK. In her practice, she experiments with scale and materials, with works ranging from large-scale murals and sculptures to architectural and lighting installations, and from drawing to etchings. Her work often references pagan motifs, interweaving tradition with the political and personal tensions of everyday life and aiming to cut into our shared cultural past. Both speculative and interrogative, her practice examines Slavic histories, paganism, migration, politics, the formation of cultural identity and environmental degradation. In this exhibition Biala will present a series of brass etchings, a material that is central to her practice due to its warm, mirror-like polish. Being an alloy of copper and zinc, it is infinitely recyclable.

Shannon Bono (b. 1995, London), is a London based painter who combines oil with found material, producing layered, figurative, compositions embedded with symbolism. Bono applies Afrocentrism in practice - a focus on the experiences of black women through spiritual planes - exploring a history of womanhood and body politics through her lens. Her work explores the internal and external body, working with Sub-Saharan African organic materials, providing a visual language for magic and storytelling. After having explored wood work during her MA at the RCA, Bono presents an organic sculptural mural climbing the back wall of the gallery, framing her canvases.

Zayn Qahtani (b. 1997, Bahrain) lives and works in London. Qahtani is a multidisciplinary artist working across drawing, painting and sculpture. Her body of work is a diligent effort at archiving a personal, synesthetic archaeology. They sway between what is seen and what is felt, compiling a personal mythology. Qahtani delves into symbolism of bodily self sacrifice; The emotional and physical act of being torn apart, destroyed and the madness that is born. She celebrates the spiritual divinity of women, and the pain built within. This animist quality becomes apparent in Zayn's use of materiality: papers crafted from Bahraini date palm trees, bioplastics made from sugarcane, and pigments borne from plants, crystals, metals and earth all intermingle to form reincarnated objects of encrypted divination and illusory storytelling.

Tuesday Riddell (b. 1992, Newcastle Upon Tyne, UK) is a London-based artist working in an endangered craft; Japanning is a 17th-century type of finish that is a European imitation of Asian Lacquer work. Reviving this method of craftsmanship, her paintings explore the depth of the forest floor. Ethereal nocturne where all cycles of life and death are found in the undergrowth. Riddell's work is an indulgence into the eerie, dark atmosphere depicted in mystical tales. Darkness changes your perception of the known, and she sees these scenes as dream spaces. They are a secret happening of things that shouldn't really be happening. Riddell imagines small scenes of conflict, death, or decay, belying initial impressions of perfect harmony.



Jessie Stevenson (b. 1993, Norwich, UK) graduated from The Slade School with a MFA in painting, 2022. She is currently Honorary Research Fellow at The Slade. Stevenson's work is inspired by landscape as a way to explore physical and emotional energies. Built of shifting, bright colour dynamics, her painting investigates a sense of escapism as a poetic and philosophical gesture. This series of ink drawings demonstrates the way in which memory and experience can enlighten the composition, composing bold yet intimate lines to connect and disrupt a sense of pictorial space. Stevenson approaches the topographical ink marks by drawing on the contrasts of light and dark themes seen in Goya's imagery – allegorical elements that unfold on the paper, mirroring the ever-shifting nature of existence.

Orfeo Tagiuri (b. 1991, Brookline, USA) received his MFA from Slade School of Fine Art in 2019. Orfeo's practice spans from painting and drawing to performance, film, woodcarving, animation, and music. The two pieces in this exhibition are delicately stained birch panels, existing somewhere between painting and sculpture. Tagiuri's practice intertwines emotion and memory, crafting a vivid montage of love's fragile dance. Symbols of pain—piercing nails and dripping blood—lay bare the rawness of inner wounds, while delicate flowers and angelic wings evoke a sense of healing, transformation and rebirth. Found imagery often acts as a starting point for Tagiuri's compositions; small details taken from larger contexts are given his attention and transformed. The two panel pieces in this show explore the meaning and feeling of ecstasy in different forms.