

## **Biography**

### **Mary Stephenson (b. 1989)**

Lives and works in London.

## **Artist Statement**

Mary Stephenson's canvases are located in the carnivalesque, as figures and objects play, dance, and drink in a frenzied choreography. Yet these scenes are simultaneously undercut with a mood of tension and apprehension, a distinctive sinister comedy which stems from a cast of characters who vie for attention with anthropomorphised objects: a sad bowl of olives, a startled fork, a wistful piece of Stilton. They punctuate these spaces in a playful attempt to explore the unseen emotions and social tensions that loom in the spaces between people. Chaotic and disordered spaces reflect feelings of drunkenness and unease – a sense of being out of control. These lively and darkly humorous paintings are a cathartic playground for Stephenson, in which she explores the competing desires and fears experienced in social situations. Representations of psychological escapism play across the paintings, as characters seek refuge in the embrace of a pillow, a meal, a lover. In dialogue with the subconscious mind, Stephenson paints rapidly, chasing a clearer idea of herself, her inner desires and how these bleed into her external world through visual representation. Stephenson is interested in our collective race to achieve the 'successful self', and aims to explore the tension and spaces in-between as we shift from the authentic to the ideal self, seeking to understand what is lost in that transition. Layering narratives and conflicting emotions to depict the contradictions of one's projected self, Stephenson undertakes a nuanced exploration of the human desire to fit in and belong.

## **Education**

2019-2022: Royal Academy Schools  
2007-2011: The Glasgow School of Art

## **Exhibitions**

### **2021**

Fertile Spoon, Duo Exhibition with Grace Pailthorpe, Bosse&Baum, London.  
Fertile Laziness, Group Exhibition, Platform Southwark, London  
Upcoming: Selfhood, Group exhibition, Bernston Bhattacharjee Gallery, London  
Upcoming: Group exhibition, Andrea Festa Fine Art, Rome

### **2020**

Monster/Beauty: An Exploration of The Female/Femme Gaze, Group exhibition, Lychee One, London  
Staying Sane, Group exhibition, Bernston Bhattacharjee Gallery, Skanor, Sweden  
Paintings On, and with paper, Group exhibition, Cob Gallery, London  
Preview London, Group exhibition, Bosse&Baum, London  
Marigolds, Group exhibition, Harlesden High Street, London  
Maison Dakota, Group exhibition, Super Dakota, Brussels

### **2019**

Egg Roll Play, Solo exhibition, After Nyne Gallery, London

### **2018**

Reserved Exposure, Group exhibition, Pestana CR7, Lisbon

## 2017

Carry On Bags, Group exhibition, Nadie Nunca Nada No, Madrid

Suck' It and See', Group exhibition, The Brick Cube, London

My Man, Solo exhibition, Downstairs at Mother, London

## 2015

Let Them Eat Steak, Group exhibition, HIX Cock n' Bull Gallery, Tramshead, London

## 2014

On Canvas, Solo exhibition, Downstairs at Mother, London

## 2012

New Contemporaries, Group exhibition, The Royal Scottish Academy, Edinburgh

## 2011

Glasgow School of Art Degree Show, Group exhibition, Glasgow

## Selected Bibliography

Between Grace Pailthorpe and Mary Stephenson: the mysterious logic of dreams, Art UK, 2021, by Philomena Epps

<https://artuk.org/discover/stories/between-grace-pailthorpe-and-mary-stephenson-the-mysterious-logic-of-dreams>

(SUR)reality Bites with Mary Stephenson, Coeur & Art, 2017, by Esther Harrison,

<https://coeureart.com/mary-stephenson/>

The Artist Making - and dating - clay men, The New York Times, 2017, by Aimee Farrell

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/13/t-magazine/art/mary-stephenson-man-clay.html>

Mary Stephenson's 3D artwork about getting lost in a foreign country, It's Nice That, 2017, by Bryony Stone,

<https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/mary-stephenson-070917>

The artist staging romantic fantasies with clay boyfriends, Huck Mag, 2017, by Marta Bausells,

<https://www.huckmag.com/art-and-culture/art-2/mary-stephenson-artist-clay-men/>

Meet the prop maker building imaginary boyfriends, It's Nice That, 2016, by Bryony Stone,

<https://www.itsnicethat.com/articles/meet-the-prop-maker-building-imaginary-boyfriends310816>

This women got so sick of being single that she made herself a boyfriend out of clay, Metro, 2016, by Miranda Larbi,

<https://metro.co.uk/2016/09/28/this-women-got-so-sick-of-being-single-that-she-made-herself-a-boyfriend-out-of-clay-6155490/>