

SOMAYA CRITCHLOW

Sincere for Synonym

October 17 - November 22, 2019

Opening Reception: Thursday, October 17, 6-8pm

FORTNIGHT INSTITUTE

60 East 4th St. NYC

Own your Truth. For one week I've been sitting in the dark now hiding from my education.

Shelly she calls herself a master in disguise fond of Ph.D.'s. During this space away from my usual commute down the hill and round the bend, there has been an exceptional amount of time to reduce tiny hours to large and particularly tall evenings huddled under the TV's glow.

I locked down the Sour Grapes to secure some Hard Choices. This had, it, for I had now become it confronted by large chests, minute waists, and big bootys. It was all a synonym for sincere anyway.

Collateral Damage seems to have its own way of finding your Triggers.

Sincere for Synonym (taken from Critchlow's eponymous piece of writing that is constructed around using interplated titles borrowed from episodes of the TV series *Love and Hip Hop*) is the second solo exhibition by artist Somaya Critchlow (b. 1993, UK). It brings together a selection of works that cross reference contemporary ways of existence through historical methods of seeing.

With a palette that is reminiscent of the mineral earth tones classically used by Renaissance painters alongside injections of newer synthetic colours, Critchlow builds an immersive world that is both imagined and exaggerated whilst simultaneously sincere. She presents us heroines and objects that emerge from open-ended backdrops of browns, Payne's greys and purples, while a pervading sense of humour forms an undercurrent that is at times strange and uncomfortable. In *What have you done!?* (*Leaving Party*), a title that alludes to Brexit and the current state of British politics, which is intimately tied up with identity and unrest, an almost Disney-princess-like character sits undressed at a table wearing nothing but white gloves, a blonde bob atop her head. The hair as it often is in Critchlow's paintings is almost laughable, comically bouncy and forming perfect curls. Though there is a sense of humour to it all, there is a palpable seriousness that perhaps may be experienced through the protagonist's seemingly laconic disinterest toward a supposed cyclical fate.

The painting *XXXyz* (*Blackface/Shooter*) is darker both in tone and subject matter, featuring a face half in shadow with hair so big and dark that it blends into the background, shrinking back from oversized breasts, with nipples that point like the tip of a gun or bullets erect. The work is self aware of the position that black people hold in society, while as in all of Critchlow's work, it resists received traditions, negotiating a personal landscape of race and sexuality.