

SOMAYA CRITCHLOW UNDERNEATH A BEBOP MOON

Exhibition Dates: 18 June - 15 August

'A free woman in an unfree society will be a monster' – Angela Carter (*The Sadeian Woman*)

Maximillian William is proud to present *Underneath a Bebop Moon*, Somaya Critchlow's debut solo presentation at the gallery and the artist's largest show to date. The exhibition comprises a body of works that demonstrate a strikingly unfettered range in scale. It includes for the first time some of the larger scale paintings that the artist has completed over the last year, as well as mid-sized works and the miniatures for which she has become known. A new series of watercolours on paper will also make its debut.

Through her rich and imaginative paintings, Critchlow has developed a personal language of psychologically charged imagery that is dark, humorous, and erotic. The bold, self-possessed women who populate Critchlow's paintings appear to occupy their own realm. Critchlow's command of art historical precedents from the Renaissance to the Rococo (and particularly its English counterparts, including Thomas Gainsborough and Joshua Reynolds) manifests through her fluid style and iconographic choices. In Critchlow's more recent works a classical element has notably emerged in her expanded focus on interiors and objects, as in the ornate settings of *Figure Holding a Little Teacup* (2019) and *Dolly* (2019), and the decadent *Slippers* (2019). These shifts in Critchlow's process grow from her rigorous engagement with the processes and materials as well as the aesthetics of her art historical predecessors.

Critchlow's increased emphasis on materiality is especially evident in the larger works, whose close-to-life scale exude a powerful new weightiness. The artist's subjects assert themselves to the viewer, returning the onlooker's gaze and reciprocating their scrutiny. Her heroines coolly reflect back any cultural, social, or bodily expectations imposed upon them. Critchlow's women slip these familiar traps, existing as free beings in a space between histories and cultures of her own creation.

The titles of her paintings, as well as that of the show, *Underneath a Bebop Moon* (a kind of abstract, suggestive non-sequitur) unravel in a poetic way that is typical of Critchlow's work. These textual fragments enhance the of atmosphere and lyricism present in her work, often with a visceral and pointed sting. *Granddaddy Clock (Power Structures)* (2019), a larger work that shares its title with an earlier miniature, playfully hints at a subversion of the patriarch and his power that manifests both physically and symbolically in the statuesque figure who casually leans into the titular clock, effortlessly and imposingly sizing it up. From these otherworldly, seemingly half-real and half-imagined pictures, Critchlow offers up an intensely personal viewpoint of the world around her.

Somaya Critchlow (b. 1993, London, UK) lives and works in London. She studied Painting at the University of Brighton before attending the Royal Drawing School, where she earned her Postgraduate Diploma. This is her third solo exhibition, following *Sincere for Synonym* at Fortnight Institute, NYC (2019) (accompanied by a publication of the same name) and *Time Never Mattered* at Efrain Lopez Projects, Chicago, IL (2018). Group exhibitions include *Xenia: Crossroads in Portrait Painting*, Marianne Boesky Gallery, NYC (2020), *Role Play*, Maximillian William, London (2019) and *They Gaze*, James Fuentes, NYC (2019).

Notes to Editors:

Somaya Critchlow (b. 1993, London) lives and works in London. She received her BA in Painting at the University of Brighton before joining The Royal Drawing School in London, where she earned a Postgraduate Diploma in 2017. Critchlow was recently included in the group show *Xenia: Crossroads in Portrait Painting* at Marianne Boesky Gallery in New York and has previously presented solo shows at Fortnight Institute, New York (2019) and Efrain Lopez Projects, Chicago (2018). Critchlow has been included in group shows at James Fuentes, New York (2019), Maximillian William, London (2019) and Orleans House Gallery, London (2019). Maximillian William looks forward to presenting her first solo show in London, *Underneath a Bebop Moon*.

Founded in 2015, Maximillian William operated a nomadic programme, curating shows internationally until opening its permanent gallery space in Fitzrovia in September 2019. At the core of the gallery's programme is its principle of engaging and facilitating emerging talent. The gallery represents a small roster of artists, all of whom it took on at early stages in their careers. It has bolstered a progressive journey with each, taking care to ensure their longevity. Maximillian William has organised solo shows in institutions such as Lever House Art Collection, NYC, Fondazione Stelline, Milan, Daelim Museum, Seoul and MEP, Paris. The gallery has produced several artist books and catalogues, with essays by renowned curators and writers such as Michele Robecchi and Lucy Soutter. Since opening its Fitzrovia space, Maximillian William has presented solo exhibitions by Reginald Sylvester II and Magda Skupinska, and the group show *Role Play*, comprising Somaya Critchlow, Lenz Geerk and Philip Guston.

For press inquiries please contact the gallery at: info@maximillianwilliam.com

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Maximillian William is open:

Monday to Friday 11:00am to 5:00pm

Saturday from 11:00am to 6:00pm

Advance appointments can be made by e-mailing info@maximillianwilliam.com or calling +44 207 998 4054. Walk-ins are prohibited; please ring the bell before entry.