

Mary Stephenson***Soft Serve***

December 30, 2022 - March 4, 2023

No. 4 - 165 Wuyuan Road, Shanghai

LINSEED is delighted to present UK-based artist Mary Stephenson's first Asian-Pacific solo exhibition, "Soft Serve". With her distinctive, dark comedy, Stephenson's highly saturated worlds move us from the familiar to the uncanny, taking us to the exploration of liminal places between the physical and internal states. The exhibition opens on December 30, 2022, and continues until March 4, 2023.

In contrast to her witty and playful depictions, often with frenzied choreographies, of figures and objects in her previous paintings, the exhibition comprises 15 new works that showcase a radical shift in Stephenson's recent practice. The richly coloured scenes evoke otherworldliness and absurdity as the figures and characters disappear. Inanimate objects, whether it is a set of stacked pillows, an impaled lemon meringue pie, a chair, a piece of cloth, or other paraphernalia, with different motions captured - tilting, melting, unwrapping, floating, stalling - in subtler ways, taking place as the fountain of affective resonance and narratives of the unknowns.

Sometimes dimly lit, sometimes illuminated with fluorescent-like light, the artist often sets the background in a homogeneous plane, corner, or void-like space. Different from the definitive physicality of objects, a space, with its fuzziness, is open to more possibilities. Stephenson refers to these canvases as 'pregnant spaces', offering a mysterious, cinematic space for the unconscious to grow. Without human presence and activities, without lucid purpose revealed, the canvases capture the happening of transition, of becoming, of ephemerality, instead of being, transcending time and place, conveying a latent sense of lostness, uncertainty, melancholy, and nostalgia.

In *The Rites of Passage*, anthropologist and folklorist Arnold van Gennep established a "three-fold sequential structure" of an individual or collective passages through the cycle of life or of nature - separation, transition, and incorporation, also known as "preliminal, liminal, and postliminal"; and the "liminal stage" is described as "a period of indeterminate identity, full of ambiguity and paradox." As the contexts prior to separation and after incorporation are lost and yet-to-be, respectively; such an "anti-structural" state of "becoming" incubates the possibilities of re-collision. Stephenson's blend of sense of distance and intimacy, of presence and absence, brings us to the soft edges and thresholds of the mind. Think of that as hypnagogia or hypnopompia, bounded by wakefulness and sleep, wandering between the stage of consciousness and unconsciousness, during those bewitching hours in midnights and early mornings, when everything swirls together, the boundaries among realities, memories, and imaginations dissolve.



玛丽·斯蒂芬森：柔软供应

Mary Stephenson: *Soft Serve*

2022年12月30日 - 2023年3月4日

上海市五原路165弄4号

LINSEED即将呈现英国艺术家玛丽·斯蒂芬森 (Mary Stephenson) 亚太地区首次个展“柔软供应” (Soft Serve)。艺术家透过作品中发自其本能直觉，略带黑色幽默的饱和世界，将观众从熟悉抽离到离奇，探索着虚实之间的边缘地带。展览将从2022年12月30日展至2023年3月4日。

与其以往诙谐且时常带有狂热情绪的人物形象描绘不同，此次的十五件作品展现了斯蒂芬森近期创作的新转变。色彩丰富的场景随着人物的消失逐渐显得神秘。无论是一沓枕头、一个被刺穿的柠檬蛋霜派、一把椅子、一块布料、或其他日常用具——倾斜、融化、解开、飘扬、停滞——它们在不同的动态过程中被捕获，无生命的物体以更微妙敏感的方式成为了未知叙述与情感共振的涌动源泉。

作品中一幕幕场景被悬置于单一色调的背景中，那些平面、转角、类似空洞的空间时而昏暗，时而被荧光色的光照亮。不同于物体可触及的确定性和物理性，空间的模糊性也带来了更多的可能。斯蒂芬森把这些画布称为“有孕的空间” (pregnant space)，潜意识得以在其神秘且如电影般的场景中肆意生长。当人物、活动与目的不再作为画面内容的提示，作品供应的则是过渡与发生的片刻，转瞬即逝、白驹过隙，或带有一丝忧郁气息，或带有一丝怀旧情绪，在不确定的模糊时空中迷失。

人类学家、民俗学家阿诺尔德·范热内普 (Arnold van Gennep) 在其著作《过渡礼仪》 (The Rites of Passage) 中提出，过渡的礼仪可划为“分隔 (阈限前) - 边缘 (阈限) - 聚合 (阈限后)”三阶段的模式，而个体或小规模群体生活的组成可被视为从一个阶段进入另一个阶段不断的过渡；其中的“阈限阶段” (liminal stage) 被描述为“一个没有身份地位差异、充满了模糊性和悖论的时段”。由于“分离”前的语境已经失去，而“融入”后的语境尚未成型，致使这样一种“反结构”的状态孵化了重新碰撞的可能性。斯蒂芬森将抽离与亲密融合，在有无之间把我们带到内心柔软的边缘；半梦半醒间，徘徊在意识和潜意识之间，犹如在午夜和凌晨那些迷离的时刻，当一切都旋转编织在一起，现实、记忆和想象之间的界限也随之消解。

