

# M+B



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## ***SECOND SMILE***

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April 23rd – May 24th, 2020

**Aaron Elvis Jupin, Adam Parker Smith, Alexander Harrison, Ali Bonfils, Alison Blickle, Anders Oinonen, Anthony Iacono, Ariana Papademetropoulos, Aurel Schmidt, Ben Sanders, Ben Spiers, Botond Keresztesi, Brittney Leeanne Williams, Cathrin Hoffmann, Charline Tyberghein, Emily Mae Smith, Emma Stern, Eric Yahnker, Giorgio De Chirico, Jana Euler, Kara Joslyn, Kevin Christy, Leonor Fini, Louisa Gagliardi, Maria Fragoso, Mimi Parent, Molly Greene, Nicolas Party, Pedro Pedro, René Magritte, Robert Lazzarini, Salvador Dali, Samuel Weinberg, Tali Lennox, Tony Matelli**



*Second Smile* looks at new tendencies in figuration with a surrealist bent. Including loans of classical surrealist works, the exhibition will focus on what parts of the surrealist project are compelling for artists today and in what ways these distinctions of movements are being dissolved. Over thirty artists in exhibition, we managed to assemble this broad and diverse group show despite our constrained circumstances. In certain cases, some of the loans intended for shipment will have to appear in the exhibition virtually. Indeed this exhibition will not be able to be open to the public, probably at all; nonetheless we have very slowly installed and documented the show to release April 23rd. We will be unveiling various other digital activations to share the exhibition with everyone remotely!

The title for the exhibition comes from an esoteric text in a half-remembered college class I took in 2002, “Surrealism and Feminism.” A memorable vagina euphemism, the phrase suggests secret feminine pleasure, secret feminine knowledge, perhaps. Certainly since 2002 female surrealists have been foregrounded making once-obscure names like Kay Sage, Unica Zurn, Claude Cahun, Leonora Carrington or Remedios Varo canon. In the past two years alone there have been five major museum shows focused on female surrealists (shows whose wall colors I’ve borrowed for this exhibition actually)

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including a great show currently on hold at the Schirn Kunsthalle. This formerly-cult college class topic is now at the center, the market has caught up with the critics, curators and scholars, and now many major collections go deep into both classical Surrealism and practicing artists today with a surrealist streak.

Most female surrealists in the last century didn't like being called female artists or surrealist artists to be honest, and with such a patriarchal manifesto-writing *ism*-festival who could blame them. It's odd that this art movement in particular was so male-dominated as its concerns were almost stereotypically feminine: dreams, the body, spirituality, the "soft sciences" of psychoanalysis, all often demoted to woman's intellectual work. "Anti-reason" seems almost like a gendered pejorative diss. I came out of that class thinking maybe the most biased force on the surrealist movement wasn't the male artists but the male-dominated critics, society and market. But with the emergence of tons of great work from female surrealists being shown essentially for the first time these past few years, we can nonetheless see the concerns of the female surrealists did have distinctive differences.

Sadly that essay is for another time (I already passed that class don't make me take it again!) Here we have thirty-five artists to share with you and very little space left to type. Generally speaking the show groups itself into some shared tendencies, whether it is a dark romance coming from Ariana Papademetropoulos, Tali Lennox, Leonor Fini and Alison Blikle; or a face/mask zone with Aurel Schmidt, Kara Joslyn, Charlene Tyberghein, Louisa Gagliardi; a creepy garden with Nicolas Party, Alexander Harrison, Molly Greene or Ben Sanders; or a more pop cartoony type of disturbing with Aaron Elvis Jupin, Adam Parker Smith, Samuel Weinberg and Botond Keresztesia. A major group would be embodied distortions of Brittney Leeanne Williams, Ben Spiers, Cathrin Hoffmann, Jana Euler and many more; one of the recurring body parts of the show is the mouth, starting with the vagina-mouth in Magritte's *Le Viol*, through the teeth-baring scream of Emily Mae Smith's archetypal apple. Louisa Gagliardi's giant spike piercing through the bottom lip of her digitally painted mouth, the open pink shell in Tali Lennox's lap or the shark-like over-toothed grin of Weinberg's pink man: the smiles in the show are the mysterious focus, ending with the shrouded—and masked—mouths of Eric Yahnker's Magritte homage.

Today we don't need to label artists female and put them in female shows; we don't even need to label artists surrealist; I've always found manifestoed art movements of the past helpful to organize thought and to hone the timeliness of their generational thinking, but they are at best a jumping off point to get the engine going. In fact, multiple artists in this show specifically said I should "stop calling it the Surrealism and Feminism show for goodness' sake." Artists today seem to prefer to be in group shows with random song lyric titles that have no theme rather than be grouped in any way, but I think we can take the middle ground: I picked the artists in the show because they had a whiff of surrealism about them, and then went out in search of a few surrealist works to flavor the sauce. Pedro Pedro's pomegranate painting has a surrealist aspect to it but far more affinity with the Peter Saul show down the street at the New Museum,

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or the Chicago Imagists (who were explicitly, avowedly inspired by Surrealism). Aurel Schmidt isn't a surrealist artist but she plays with a person like a *cadavre exquis* and I certainly needed at least one artist with the balls to depict some vaginas!

I would love to write in depth about each of the contributions to this show, so watch out for wordy wall labels and the forthcoming *Second Smile* catalogue by Anteism Books available in May

Above: **Kara Joslyn** *Today The Devil Whispered In My Ear, "You're Not Strong Enough To Withstand The Storm." And I Whispered, "6 Feet Back, Motherfucker."*, 2020, acrylic and polymer automotive paint on canvas, 36 x 36 inches, 91 x 91 cm

