



Collectible DRY spoke with the five emerging artists behind *The Reality in Whytch You Create*, STUDIO WEST's inaugural group show on display in Notting Hill until February 17

Words by: Gilda Bruno

Launched at the newly opened contemporary art gallery STUDIO WEST on January 14, *The Reality in Whytch You Create* is a group show bringing together some of the most exciting personalities on London's emerging art scene. Featuring paintings from Alfie Rouy, Anna Woodward, Lydia Makin and Sholto Blissett accompanied by sound and video pieces by multidisciplinary artist Salomé Wu, the exhibition turns the spotlight onto the concept of 'reality' — here conceived in an expanded sense — "drawing on dreams, subconscious experience, and myths."

Named after one of the artworks currently showing at the gallery, namely Rouy's *The Reality in Whytch You Create* is *Swyptly Healed by Devotion to Good* (2020), the event invites creatives and the public alike to reconsider their take on reality by immersing viewers in otherworldly fantasies, surreal landscapes and hypothetical post-human scenarios. In *The Reality in Whytch You Create*, "each artist imagined a constructed world in their own particular way," says STUDIO WEST's owner and curator Caroline Boseley. As I take a glance at the hypnotising canvases on display, it seems no coincidence to me that the idea for this first show came straight from one of the participating artists:

"I met Lydia Makin at the Slade graduate show in mid-2021 and was transfixed by her stunning, large-scale canvases," she explains. "One of the works displayed was Grace (2021) and it was this beautiful work with its ethereal central figure, that inspired me to curate this particular show. I had Sholto Blissett's work in mind too; in Garden of Hubris XXV (2021) his precise lines, and immaculate brushwork portray a constructed land, which looks too perfect to be true. From there the other artists were selected, all of whom explore imaginary worlds, altered realities and dream-like spaces; the works blend so well together, whilst being visually very different, and share common influences such as classicism, architecture and escapism."

Talking about how the pandemic brought artists and art professionals to reassess their priorities — "people spent a lot more time at home, enhancing their living spaces. Murals and public art expanded, with people yearning for visual treats, whilst exploring their neighbourhoods." — Boseley also stressed the need to break free from unwelcoming 'white cube'

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galleries and create “a platform for emerging artists to show their work in an inviting and hospitable exhibition space and a creative centre in a broader sense.” Below, the five protagonists of *The Reality in Whytch You Create* discuss the visions at the core of their artworks, their inspirations and process, letting us into their ‘boundless’ world.



Sholto Blisset

“I have always enjoyed painting as a means of expression above any other artistic medium, and landscape painting especially. This combination of method and genre allows me to imagine and create new scenes, new ways of thinking. As a child, this was born out of innocent whimsy; as I got older, I was introduced to Romanticism and subsequent critiques of this movement: specifically, Romanticism’s effect on the land and our – human’s – relationship to the land.”

“This connection has been accentuated over the last two years: lockdowns and social distancing requirements have attuned us to our spatial awareness in relation to other people, the ‘outdoors’ and wider global geographies. Interestingly, the pandemic has shifted many peoples’ attitudes about vast, open, isolated spaces from (traditional) negative feelings, to positive: it is only in these large spaces that many feel ‘safe’, away from human and airborne contagion. It is this reinvigorated sense of awareness about self-in-space that I hope my audience connects to when viewing my work.”

“Whilst influences can’t be avoided in any art, I’d like to think – at least, I feel – that I don’t consciously work in imitation of artists. I paint for myself and what excites me. However, as an artist dealing with the history of European and American depictions of ‘Nature’, I have been attentive to the works of similar artists, from the 18th century to today: Claude, Bierstadt, members of the Hudson River School, and Kehinde Wiley as well as examining the artistic techniques of Turner.”

*“As the title suggests, or at least, how I interpret it, *The Reality in Whytch You Create* revolves around our experience in the world: subjectivity, the unconscious, and constructed narratives. The alternative spelling of ‘whytch’ seems to pun on the alternative realities we can create. Indeed, the attention given to this word also makes me think of “witches”: icons of creation, deception, magic. To me, this show is all about reflecting on our lived fictions. This is what my work highlights: specifically, the categories of ‘man’ and ‘Nature’ and the very fabrication of that distinction. This has been a key element to my *Garden of Hubris* series, *Garden of Hubris XXV* being the painting that I feel best encapsulates this.”*

The Reality in Whytch You Create is open at STUDIO WEST until February 17