

FRESTONIAN GALLERY

ANNA FREEMAN BENTLEY

make believe

Private View – Wednesday 21st September, 6-8pm

Exhibition dates – 22nd September – 5th November 2022

Frestonian Gallery is delighted to present at our London gallery the second part of Anna Freeman Bentley's extraordinary new body of work, following her highly successful solo presentation at the 2022 edition of The Armory Show, New York. The series – entitled 'make believe' is derived from an informal artist's residency at Sky Studios during the latter stages of lockdown in 2021. The artist chose to seek out the set of a film as the site to investigate ideas of reality and fiction, invisible boundaries and spaces of artifice.

Freeman Bentley's work is characterised by a tension between her strictly disciplined process, and her lyrically loose and joyous painting style. Her choice of subject matter has been a closely observed exercise in focus and control – choosing to paint interiors exclusively, and at all points leaving those interiors free of overt human presence, instead allowing the implied *markers* of presence – a scattering of objects; an open door; a window ajar – to 'do the work'.

The nature of these interiors follows a studied coda – in every case providing a conceptual element of tension between the seen and the unseen, the known and the unknowable. This is perfectly exemplified in the 'make believe' series, where the film sets depicted are both real and unreal, solid and yet impermanent – to be dismantled once the movie production wraps. Occasionally Freeman Bentley allows a clue to the essential nature of her subject to creep in to the picture plane... a lighting rig here, a coiled electrical cable there... reminding us that what we are looking at is a work of art inspired by a work of artifice. As the process of arriving at a subject and composition is conceptually rigorous, so too is the physical production of the work – with each motif being fully explored in sketches, preparatory drawings and then works on paper before 'graduating' onto canvas or panel.

It is, then, in the act of painting itself that Freeman Bentley's style and skill takes flight above such rigour and restraint. Her expressive brushwork, masterful control of both thinned and thickened medium and singularly bold, exuberant palette brings forth work that is as vibrant and evocative as it is detailed and considered. The works in 'make believe' are as cinematic as the subject that inspired them, resulting in a body of paintings that radiate a light and life all of their own.

Anna Freeman Bentley (b. 1982, London) is a graduate of the Royal College of Art (receiving her MA in Painting in 2010), having previously studied at the Kunsthochschule Weissenhof, Berlin, and Chelsea College of Art and Design. She has exhibited widely in the UK and internationally. Recent solo exhibitions include Frestonian Gallery, London (2020), DENK Gallery, Los Angeles (2019), Ahmanson Gallery, Irvine, California (2018) and Space K, Seoul (2017). Her work has been included in prestigious prizes and institutional exhibitions such as the Dentons Prize, East London Painting Prize, the Prague Biennale and the Bloomberg New Contemporaries. In 2019 she was awarded both the Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant and the Palazzo Monti residency in Brescia, Italy. Her work is held in the Saatchi Collection & Hogan Lovells Collection (London), Hotel Crillon Collection (Paris), Ahmanson Collection (California), The Basmal Sulaiman Museum of Contemporary Art (Jeddah) and numerous private collections worldwide. She lives and works in London.

The exhibition 'make believe' is accompanied by a catalogue with a new essay on Freeman Bentley's work by Thomas Marks, and an interview between the artist and film producer Georgie Paget. For information on the publication and further info on the artist please contact: galler@frestoniangallery.com