

THE ARMORY SHOW

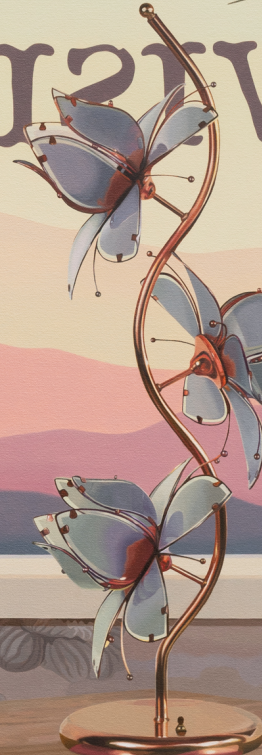
2023

Best Wishes

777

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Nowhere

ДАЗЯО & ИОІЗІУ



KAYLA WITT



S&T

I Don't Know, But I Believe

Kayla Witt

Sow & Tailor is proud to present *I Don't Know, But I Believe* by Los Angeles-based artist Kayla Witt (b. 1994, Calgary, AB, Canada) on the occasion of The Armory Show (September 8 - 10, 2023).

In *I Don't Know, But I Believe* Kayla Witt sets the viewer on a journey to find meaning in life and achieve self-actualization in a barren landscape. In her interior spaces, both commercial and domestic, inanimate objects are energetically charged, creating a feeling that something has gone askew. The focal point of this latest series is *Available for Parties*, where one finds a psychic storefront existing as a factual mirage. Surrounded by nothing but Joshua trees and a mountain range in the distance, the store appears like a fever dream, prompting viewers to wonder, "Whose shop could this belong to?" and "Who would find their way here?" For Witt, the shopkeeper and the temporary visitor are both on their own journey to self-discovery, escaping the city's anxiety to find balance in the desert. The subsequent paintings are interiors of the storefront, which she aesthetically links through floral wallpaper and other trinkets that are loaded with symbolism drawn from wellness culture, psychics, and the occult. In *Pull Up a Chair*, dusty footprints on the floor serve as traces of an inhabitant, as does a bed hidden in the corner of the composition. Witt points to the harshness of living in the desert through depictions of stained walls, flaking paint, and unbearable heat. The outside also makes its way inside via dust and tumbleweeds. The longer one spends with the paintings, the more details emerge, pointing to an uncomfortable and off-putting environment. The artist leaves it up to viewers to imagine the solitary character and formulate their own narrative and understanding of space.

Witt's paintings are the result of intensive research, beginning with mapping and photographing psychic shops throughout California. Next, she digitally manipulates these images to create what she refers to as "collages." Witt takes images from the Internet and books, extracts from her own photography, consults Google maps, utilizes Photoshop, and toys with AI to create richly layered interiors and exteriors that are full of carefully placed objects - objects that are meant to aid one in the quest for spiritual and physical well-being. Finally, she reworks these images into detail-rich oil paintings. Witt manages to transform the genre of still-life into one that is full of movement, theatricality, and narrative. In *A Collection to Solve the Riddle* a staircase shelf serves as an obstacle course one must navigate to reach the final destination: prayer hands that symbolize attaining serenity. A collection of banal yet magical objects are precariously placed, like a slinky about to land on a Jell-O cake or a woman stuck in a globe that is at risk of shattering under the force of a floating hammer. Behind the bookshelf stands a teddy bear wearing pajamas embroidered with the words "Get Well Soon." Illness, according to Witt, is often a barrier in one's path. While the artist brings the viewer to places of wellness, she frequently critiques the capitalization of this culture, all the while admittedly falling into its trap. For Witt, it is the journey to physical and spiritual well-being rather than the quick fixes money can buy that leads to self-actualization.

Kayla Witt (b. 1994, Calgary, AB, Canada) completed her studies at OCAD University (BFA, 2016) and the University of Waterloo (MFA, 2020). She has had solo exhibitions at Sow & Tailor, Los Angeles (2023) and the University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Waterloo (2020). Witt has participated in group exhibitions at WOAW Gallery, Hong Kong (2023); Felix Art Fair, Los Angeles (2023); the University of Waterloo Art Gallery, Waterloo (2022); The Gladstone Hotel, Toronto (2019); The White House Studio Project, Toronto (2018); Critical Distance Centre for Curators, Toronto (2018), to name a few. She was in residence at Otis College of Art and Design, Los Angeles (2018); Struts Gallery and Faucet Media Arts Centre, Sackville (2018); Spark Box Studio, Picton (2017); YYZ Artist's Outlet, Toronto (2017); and Artscape Gibraltar Point, Toronto (2016). Her work has been featured in *HypeArt*, *Hyperallergic*, *Canadian Art*, and *CBC Arts*.

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Kayla Witt

Available for Parties, 2023

Oil on canvas

67" x 94 1/2" x 1 3/4" [HxWxD] (170.18 x 240.03 x 4.45 cm)

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Kayla Witt

Pull Up A Chair, 2023

Oil on canvas

55" x 73 1/2" x 1 3/4" [HxWxD] (139.7 x 186.69 x 4.45 cm)

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Kayla Witt

A Collection to Solve the Riddle, 2023

Oil on canvas

52" x 50" x 1 3/4" [HxWxD] (132.08 x 127 x 4.45 cm)

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Kayla Witt

The Space Must Have Been Empty Until Now, 2023

Oil on canvas

24" x 18" x 1 3/4" [HxWxD] (60.96 x 45.72 x 4.45 cm)

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Kayla Witt

Concentrate and Ask Again, 2023

Oil on canvas

59" x 45" x 1 3/4" [HxWxD] (149.86 x 114.3 x 4.45 cm)

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Kayla Witt

***Balance*, 2023**

Oil on canvas

35 1/2" x 27" x 1 3/4" [HxWxD] (90.17 x 68.58 x 4.45 cm)

#KW1020