

ELAINE SPEIRS

Arusha Gallery | info@arushagallery.com | 0131 557 1412

BIOGRAPHY

Elaine Speirs was born in Johannesburg and moved to Paisley as a child. Her childhood experiences in and between these two places spurred an interest in the themes of fragility, contradiction and reinvention that recur throughout her work.

Speirs explores the stark contrast she observes between the rich contours of female personhood and the depersonalised portraits of women that appear in the public sphere. Referencing a variety of imagery – ranging from eighteenth century portraiture to contemporary photography and film – the work reclaims the fleeting moments of humanity. Speirs glimpses in these images, establishing a tentative connection between the distant and the intimate, between the universal and the personal. Beautiful Regrets has an uneasy coexistence of contradictory states: strength and vulnerability, loneliness and hope, love and despair. Speirs examines these tensions by capturing fleeting moments of humanity with Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 film Romeo and Juliet.

Speirs examines these tensions by employing a dynamic technique of wiping and layering that suggests the human process of erasure and reinvention. We are left with a series of momentary resolutions that contain both clarity and a sense of contingency.

Speirs trained at Edinburgh College of Art and the Slade School of Fine Art in London. A regular exhibitor at the RSA, with V&A, and at the SSA, she has also exhibited at the Mall Galleries in London. Her awards include the Glasgow Club Award (2012), the Caron Keating Memorial Award, Mall Galleries, London (2012) and the John Purcell Works on Paper Award, Mall Galleries (2015). She was shortlisted for the National Open Art Competition (2014), the Threadneedle Painting Prize (2014), W Gordon Smith Award (2016) and selected for the BP Portrait Award (2019). She lives in Edinburgh with her three daughters.

EDUCATION

1996 – 97

Education Institute, UCL, PGCE

1993 – 95

Slade School of Fine Art, UCL, M.A.

1989 – 93

Edinburgh College of Art, B.A. Hons

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SELECTED SOLO EXHIBITIONS

2023

Disquiet Beauty, Arusha Gallery, Edinburgh

2019

Beautiful Regrets, AndGallery, Edinburgh,

2017

Portrait of Her, Arusha Gallery, Edinburgh

2014

No Small Dreams, And Collective, Bridge of Allan

2013

Lost Sleep, Open Eye Gallery, Edinburgh

SELECTED GROUP EXHIBITIONS

2021

The Stratford Gallery, Cotswald
AndGallery, Edinburgh

2020

Loup Gallery, New York
Glimpse of Gold, Patriothall Gallery, Edinburgh

2019

BP Portrait Award, National Portrait Gallery, London

2018

AndGallery, Edinburgh

AWARDS AND RESIDENCIES

2015

Purcell Works on Paper Award, Mall Galleries, London

2013

Caron Keating Memorial Art Award, Mall Galleries, London

2012

Glasgow Art Club Award