

Mary Herbert

Like Glaciers

November 20 - December 23, 2021

Moskowitz Bayse is pleased to present *Like Glaciers*, an exhibition of new drawings and paintings by London-based artist Mary Herbert. *Like Glaciers* is the artist's first solo presentation in Los Angeles, and will be installed in our Viewing Room from November 20 - December 23, 2021.

Mary Herbert's soft pastels and paintings, rooted in interminably fluid states of being, parting, and becoming, float through a vastness of experiences lived and yet-unknown. Moments of immense human gravity—birth, death—exist alongside the rhythmic and monumentally predictable—a sunset, a body of water. The soul's existence proves as obvious as the mountain's. When Herbert's figures threaten to dissolve into their surroundings, or vice-versa, the viewer considers the permeability of the walls in the room, or the concrete underfoot. In a spiritually-tuned sci-fi world where the whims and absolutes of discovery and belief become one, Herbert's work finds meaning in those liminal places too fleeting for dogma to creep in.

In *Like Glaciers*, for example, a group of shrouded faces emerge from the base of the titular landform. They are scarcely more immediately human than the glacier, perhaps less so than the red sun that pierces the acid-green sky, mediated by an unfamiliar haze. One figure holds an owl out toward the viewer, another guards a slice of yellow glow. The light source, as with much of Herbert's work, emanates from within, despite the straining red sun's conspicuous presence. Light becomes less a formal concern, suggesting itself instead as a spiritual matter.

Likewise with Herbert's figures. They often become bodily talismans, carrying around some ancient-future wisdom and offering it—selectively, discretely—to the viewer. In *Raised by a River*, two spectral bodies with elongated arms rise from the water, palely illuminating their surroundings. The facts of their anatomies call into question received knowledge that might silence another's belief or discovery. But does anyone doubt the river's secrecy? Herbert presents a world not beyond our own, but of it.

In her paintings on canvas, Herbert fully avails herself of the medium, layering successive washes on top of one another until the surface begins to resemble the faded walls of a sunlit abbey, perpetually renewed and left again to fade. Herbert's paintings expand her world, becoming not just depictions of it, but objects pulled from within it. In *Neighbours of Fire*, the rendering of the molten rain recalls art damaged and destroyed by disaster, especially as the picture speaks to the depths of empathy. In paint, Herbert's work retains its essential luminosity; the fire spits and rages, while the embracing figures burn and glow in its midst.

Indeed, Herbert's work argues for a sort of cosmic stoicism; with the human consciousness being no grander than the river's, and the depths of our suffering no more profound than the mountain's, we're left with the sort of half-understanding that threatens to descend into nihilism. Rather, Herbert offers empathy. We are constantly confronted with reminders of our vast limitations in the forms of mystery, enchantment, and horror, both within and outside the scope of human understanding. Herbert distills our primal need for answers, tethering us to the universe as if to tell us not to worry—the sun certainly doesn't.