

Laura Lit

Where You End and I Begin



WOMEN & THEIR WORK

June 17 - July 27, 2017

Austin, Texas



LINDSAY, oil on canvas, 36" x 24", 2017

Cover Panel: *CALEB I*, oil and embroidery on canvas, 40" x 30", 2014

Laura Lit

*Where You End
and I Begin*

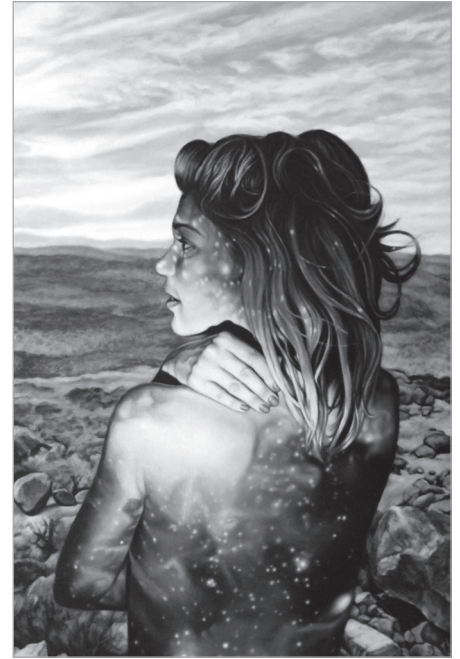
How do we apprehend light? How do we encounter it, and can we possess it? Masterful chiaroscuro plays with the moment of first apprehending light, as if the subject of the painting had never encountered light until now. For the old masters, the light source was more often than not a candle. And not coincidentally, it's that moment of first lighting a candle, when the newborn flame must be protected by a cupped hand, that light meets the subject's face in the most startling way—think of El Greco's *A Boy Blowing on an Ember to Light a Candle* or Georges de La Tour's *The Young Singer*. These first encounters with light foretell whatever story follows. We can't help but follow this candle-lit person down the hall, simply because we are curious about where his or her story will go.

The paintings in Laura Lit's *Where You End and I Begin* play with a similar moment. Candlelight has been replaced with spotlight, red light, late afternoon California sunlight, and projected light. And here is where the personality of each subject emerges. In *Vanessa*, we see someone surprised by the intensity of the spotlight, as if caught dancing in the middle of a dream. In *Sam*, we see a man comforted by the texture of light, as if touched and warmed by the encounter. In *Stephen*, the subject denies the inevitability and inescapability of the light and finds something approximating relief in the darkness. In *Tiffani*, the subject moves along with the light, riding slants of it like they were a vast current taking her from right to left across the canvas.

We see someone paradoxically hiding in the light in *Paul*; the subject is able to recede into the image projected on his torso. Conversely, the subject in *Darija* plays with the light, making it, and her, more conspicuous in the process.

These moments of intersection, between person and light, reveal the innermost secrets of character. It's a novel way of describing oneself, and also a fascinating question: how do you relate to light? The work in this exhibition suggests that the answer will not be reduced to generality. The ecstatic encounter of subject and light in *Untitled (Nude in the Rain)* shares little with either ecstatic encounter in *Will* or *Darija*—*Will*'s subspecies of ecstasy evokes the adjective 'mystical', and *Darija*'s 'transcendental'. But adjectival attribution precisely misses the point. Each subject seals each work with a thumbprint, a stamp in whatever source is illuminating him or her. And it is this apprehension, this temporary possession of light, that affirms interiority.

The most salient quality of the works exhibited here—and a plausible explanation of the exhibition's title—is that each moment of interiority becomes the viewer's interiority. This is the same suspension of self that happens when viewing the aforementioned El Greco or de La Tour: yes, we follow the candle-holder down the hallway because we are drawn to the light and we must. We are compelled to follow the story, but, crucially, not as a spectator. We don't look at these masterworks from without; rather, we inhabit the world of the subject from within, suspending the self that walked into the gallery or museum. There's a somersault that happens, a recognition of a clear alternative that often presents itself



DARIJA (JOSHUA TREE),
oil on canvas, 36" x 24", 2015

in a dream, the dream-logic being, 'Oh yeah, I can just walk on the walls'. And whenever that flip happens in a painting, the feeling is not dissimilar from seeing a solution to a puzzle—the puzzle being the interior world of each painting's subject. This inverted gaze, when we shift from looking at a painting to looking out from the eyes of the painting's subject, carries us through alternative futures. In Lit's work exhibited here, we communicate with each subject in this first flash of light and momentarily look out into each dark hallway, our own faces brightened at a freshly unfamiliar future.

It's difficult to isolate one feeling in any artistic space. To me, the conceptual work of German contemporary artist, Anne Imhof, begins with an admission in objectivity in feeling and then proceeds with the artistic problems of "How do I capture exactly that?" It's not

dissimilar to an entomologist who finds an iridescent beetle in the undergrowth, is struck by its brilliance, and then endeavors to bring it back to human ken. This hypothetical entomologist, however, must not only bring the beetle back to the city, where the museums are, but bring the beetle back alive. The beetle must appear as natural as possible in these new forced environs. Here's the delicacy in the artistic task that both Anne Imhof and Laura Lit have undertaken: 'I've seen these flashes of brilliant feeling, but how do I keep that feeling alive in an immersive performance or on a canvas on a gallery wall?'

Light helps. There's an animating power in the light hitting each subject. Not coincidentally, we refer to an epiphany as a 'flash of recognition'. The instant, the 'flash', is inextricably linked to the recognition and to the ability to isolate a thought or a feeling in the torrent of thoughts/feelings/moods that we experience. Rather than think of moods as things that arise from ourselves, it may help

to consider a more pagan view of moods as free-floating mists that we stumble into, purely by chance. In the case of the works exhibited here, each mood gets a different light.

It's easy to overlook the proliferation of light sources, with respect to the type of light, in the modern era. Sunlight, moonlight, and firelight—that was pretty much it for most of our history. Of course, we now have incandescence, fluorescence, neonescence, LEDescence, and iphonescreenscence. And these, if there's any truth to the idea that feeling has a corresponding light, have added to our vocabulary of moods. But we also see, given the unrelenting assault of synthetic light, a changed relationship to the natural light sources of sun, moon and fire. The suggestion in *Sam* and *Bess (I and II)*, is that we now luxuriate in sunlight the same way that a Victorian would luxuriate in the moonlight—everything has shifted one seat to the right. In this way, chiaroscuro seems the most



PAUL, oil on canvas, 38" x 32", 2014

contemporary of techniques to anchor work that seeks to explore the myriad ways in which we feel today.

The great success of *Where You End and I Begin*, is the moment when the viewer, months after seeing the paintings in person, recognizes one powerful mood amidst the noise of contemporary life, and an image and a particular light instantly flash to mind, cutting through the static.

Will Chancellor is a writer residing in New York City.



SAM, oil on canvas, 24" x 36", 2017

Laura Lit

Education

2001 BFA, Painting, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, RI

Exhibition History

Solo Exhibitions

2017 *Where You End and I Begin*, Women & Their Work, Austin, TX

2014 *Portraits and Perforations*, EyeHeart Gallery, New York, NY

2005 *Needle in the Hay*, Avenue Arts Venue, Dallas, TX

Group Exhibitions (Selection)

2016 *Naissance*, Gallery 701 at the Long Center, Austin, TX

2015 *Portraits*, Art for the People, Austin, TX

Stitch Fetish 3, Hive Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

With Proof of Purchase, Hive Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Stitch Fetish 2, Hive Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

2013 *Hive Group Show*, Hive Gallery, Los Angeles, CA

Unnatural Abduction, 8531 Lankershim Blvd., Sun Valley, CA

2012 *California Open Exhibition*, TAG Gallery, Santa Monica, CA

2006 *Metrognome Collective*, Firehouse Gallery, Ft. Worth, TX

2005 *Calavera*, Ice House Cultural Center, Dallas, TX

RISD Represented, Trudy Labell Fine Art, Naples, FL

Rock, Paper, Scissors, Local Color Gallery, Arlington, TX

Strangers in Dialogue, 500X Gallery, Dallas, TX

Second Saturday, Avenue Arts Venue, Dallas, TX



COLEY, oil on wood, 24" x 18", 2017



WILL, oil on wood board, 24" x 18", 2016



STEPHEN, oil on canvas, 36" x 24", 2016

Women & Their Work

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Known for its pioneering spirit, embrace of artistic innovation, and commitment to Texas audiences and artists, Women & Their Work is now celebrating its 39th anniversary. Presenting over 50 events a year in visual art, dance, theater, music, and film, the gallery features on-going exhibitions of Texas women artists and brings artists of national stature to Texas audiences. Since its founding, Women & Their Work has presented 1,895 artists in 308 visual art exhibitions, 125 music, dance and theater events, 16 film festivals, 29 literary readings and spoken word performances, and 606 workshops in programming that reflects the broad diversity of this region. Nationally recognized, Women & Their Work has been featured in Art in America, the New York Times, ArtForum, and on National Public Radio and was the first organization in Texas to receive a grant in visual art from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Women & Their Work reaches over 650 school children and teachers each year through gallery tours, gallery talks with exhibiting artists, participatory workshops, in-school performances, dance master classes, and teacher workshops.



women and
their work

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OneTouchPoint
GINNY'S



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