

BUSINESS, DESIGN, FASHION, HAPPENINGS, TRAVEL, VISUAL ARTS

SPOTLIGHT

Spotlight Florence Houston

Championed by Beata Heuman

ONES TO WATCH

Interview FLORENCE HOUSTON
Photography CANDICE LAKE

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Delectable, sensuous and inviting – Florence Houston's paintings explore the endless potential of colour and texture through portraits of female muses, everyday scenes and more unusual repeated motifs, such as Victorian jelly centerpieces, sumptuous and joyful. "Jelly", the artist once said, "feels like what oil paint was created for; the lustre, saturation and shine is a thrill to paint."

Houston was classically trained as a painter and her process is rooted in her deep study and understanding of colour and composition. She usually figures out the colours very early on in her process, until she achieves the perfect palette.

Houston's champion for The Wick is Beata Heuman, who said: "I have always felt a kinship with Florence but perhaps that is wishful thinking on my part since she is the coolest dresser I know! We do have these connections where our paths overlap without crossing and being drawn to her work is part of the enchantment and it feels intuitive. There is something grim about trying to match your interior with your artwork, or even worse vice-versa, but they do need to bring something out in one another. Subtle tension is something Florence masters to perfection. It doesn't insist on itself but it's there and the intrigue keeps you on your toes. I reach for her alluring pieces time and time again, whether it is a huge juicy jelly in oil or her squiggly lampshades. I can't get enough..."

Houston, meanwhile, attributes the nostalgic flavour of her works to spending a lot of her childhood at her grandparents' home "which had last been decorated in the 1960s, we didn't have a TV and were relatively cut off from the world in rural Shropshire. Therefore my childhood nostalgia isn't set in the 90s like most of my contemporaries, it's somewhere in the 60s and 70s with input from my Vogue subscription which I had from the age of 12. Everything I'm drawn to paint has a lovely nostalgic feeling to me and reminds me of a golden age I want to be part of."

The artist cites her 2023 solo exhibition Juicy! as her biggest achievement to date - "I did it all myself and really considered the feeling I wanted it to have, from the cocktails to the catalogue, I wanted it to feel cinematic. My husband, who is the filmmaker Geordie Leyland made a short film with me to act as a sort of trailer to the show."

Next up, the London-based artist has a solo show at Lyndsey Ingram, (due to open late April). What can we expect this time? "It's a lot of very flamboyant food with a sense of repression, 1950s style. I've been painting it throughout my pregnancy and now finishing it after the birth. My time in the studio has felt more precious and important than ever and I've found music has been best way to change gears quickly and get into the right headspace to paint."

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Above Florence Houston, Green Whip