

PRESS RELEASE**Vortic London Collective****Lydia Blakeley*****Looks like you've reached the end*****18 July - 8 August 2020**

There is no road map for this territory.

— Kenneth Goldsmith, *Wasting Time on the Internet*, 2016

We are pleased to present an exhibition of new work by Lydia Blakeley. Made up of 8 paintings that feature characters and scenes resonant through her practice, the exhibition centres itself amidst a crucial animus: the saturation through mass circulation of images—the status of being everywhere at once, without origin or end. In Blakeley's work, subjects gathered from an accelerating media culture are transferred to oil on linen with slow and deliberate attention. These auratic works present a logic of consumption untethered from rhyme or reason—a world in which reports of rapacious forest fires are followed by images of a cute Possum; riotous dissent is seen side by side with dogs parading at Crufts or videos of sheep taking over a child's playground in South Wales.

It is with banal tragedy that Google Images thus assert their terminal caption, "Looks like you've reached the end." The proposition is satirical, bordering humour with ignominy—an ambiguity that speaks to the unique ability of Blakeley's work to capture the contradictory effects of the digital world, more connected and alienated than ever before. To hit a blank wall online appears the subject of subtle derision or melancholy: to have drifted aimlessly off the map. Captured in a shellac photorealism, Blakeley's works are equally aware of the insidious inertia of our time spent online as they are exultant and celebratory of our creative engagement with images in a variety of new formats; their power to be replicated, remediated and shared in dizzying fashion. Reproduction, collage and dissemination are most welcome.

Blakeley's works are humorous. They poke and grin at our mindless scrolling, the exhaustive randomness of visual ephemera that accrues in our iPhones or browser history—what poet and critic Kenneth Goldsmith sincerely calls "the new memoir". Persian Cat Room Guardian memes are painted from numerous angles—blissfully gormless and serene; the revelry and aftermath of British quasi-regalia exposed in all its unsavoury excess. These are characters and contexts Blakeley has a shared proximity to - born and raised in Berkshire, England, a witness to the chaotic underbelly of fine spectacle. But also as an enveloped consumer - like many of us - of a new global economy of signs siphoning through Instagram, Twitter and TikTok, through fashion editorials of *The Face*, *Elle* or *Vogue* or in rehashed prints of Pauline Boty or Amy Sherald. Tabloid moments of vice, indulgence and luxury hand in hand with chucklesome retweets and bizarre screenshots.

Through bright pink underlays washed over with layers of colour, Blakeley paintings presents her work with an eerie hollowness: a visual meditation on the screen as much as it is a subtle evocation of real depthlessness. An imaginary archetype or imperfect cliché that haunts their jovial wink. As Blakeley herself notes, "Underneath that humour there's a darkness, maybe a

sadness too". Besieged with visual ephemera from day's start to end, the implication of its absence is eschatology: *looks like you've reached the end*. Blakeley's work is engaged with the power of images and image-making on its own terms, as a series of shifting velocities and affects—none of which can be claimed by a sole author or with prescriptive intent. Rather, with spontaneity and subversion. As Goldsmith optimistically writes, "There is no road map for this territory".

**Lydia Blakeley** (b. 1980 Berkshire, UK) lives and works in Yorkshire. Recent solo exhibitions include *Hospitality*, Steve Turner, Los Angeles, US (2020); *Hellhole*, Plaza Plaza, London, UK (2019); *You're Doing Amazing, Sweetie*, The Boardroom, Leeds, UK (2018); and *Leisure*, Vernon Street Gallery, Leeds, UK (2017).

Selected group exhibitions include *Suture*, Niru Ratnam, London, UK (2020); *The Messe in St. Agnes*, König Galerie, Berlin DE (2020); *Staying Sane*, Berntson Bhattacharjee Gallery, Skanör, Sweden, SE (2020); *Drawn Together*, UNIT London, Online (2020); *21st Figure*, BC Projects, Online (2020); *When Shit Hits the Fan*, Guts Gallery, Online (2020); *Crowd*, Hannah Barry Gallery, London, UK (2020); *Office Space. Is This It?* Online (2020); *FBA Futures 2020*, Mall Galleries, London, UK (2020); *Pets*, TOMA Project Space, Essex, UK (2019); *When Species Meet*, Transition Two Gallery, London, UK (2019); *Fanspeak*, Castlefield Gallery, Manchester, UK (2019); *Full English*, Platform Southwark, London, UK (2019); *Ultra: Art for the Women's World Cup*, J.Hammond Projects, London, UK (2019); *Mission To Touch The Sun: SunBurnt*, Paradise Works, Manchester, UK (2019); *Utopia Through Nostalgia*, The Koppel Project Hive, London, UK (2019); *Young British Painters*, Arthill Gallery, London, UK (2018); and *For I'm not among the waders: The story of Zebadee*, Post\_Institute, London, UK (2018).

In 2018 and 2020 Blakeley was the recipient of The Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant, Canada, CA. In 2020 she won The Minerva Prize for her participation in FBA Futures 2020 at Mall Galleries, London, UK.