

PRESS RELEASE**Vortic London Collective****George Rouy****Rupture****26 June - 17 July 2020**

George Rouy's new work builds on the energy and preoccupations of paintings made over the past two years, gathered in the groups *Squeeze Hard Enough it Might Just Pop!*, *Leaking Visions of Red*, *Smothered Awake*, *Cut Down a Tree to Build a Wooden Horse but to Ride it you may get Splinters*, and *Maelstrom*. In each of these, it is the verbs that catalyse and characterise their painted world - popping, leaking, smothering, cutting, riding - presenting us with a form of psychic and social chimera.

In this new exhibition we find paintings that behave visually as the words do verbally and in meaning: with dynamism, force and unease. They feel as the world does now - slippery, fluid, ruptured. George Rouy's approach to the body - and his pursuit of painting - is one of contradiction, harmony and perpetual transformation, criss-crossing gender, form and disposition.

His work is a fever dream of amorphous, fluid embodiment: rhapsodic portraits of 21st century desire, of physical dissonance, mystery and secrecy, ecstasy and turmoil, proximity and distance. The work is liberated from established ways of being. In its place is an examination of the psychic effects of what encounters mean and feel like, drawing equally on the here-and-now, digital culture and the industrial advances of our age, as they do from primordial expression and the classical demands of colour and form.

The human figure has long preoccupied artists of all times; its story dominates the history of art. In its imagination and in its image-making we find clues to how artists have grappled and engaged with the political and socio-cultural moods and attitudes of their moment. We are in a time of renewed and committed interest in figurative painting and George Rouy uses the figure - constrained and liberated - as many-sided prism to examine and interrogate the contemporary crucibles of gender, fiction and technology.

This part artificial, part absurd, part absolute truth gives George Rouy's subjects an emotional vulnerability matched by their physical instability: couples are two but one, monumental seated or standing figures assume both solid and liquid feeling, expressions are in flux (a cry is a sly smile), and the horse is grounded - bucking to the floor which opens up beneath it. Finding few clues, we come to feel a form of empathy and identification with the hypnotic sensibility of the works but it is still only the comfort of strangers in this limbo of muted places and slippery edges.

George Rouy's recent works are capable of repose and disturbance, equilibrium and discontent. They present us with images that could not exist in another time, place or context than our own, yet these paintings know the perils of the narrative world. In their dialectic variety they are nevertheless also connected by their pursuit of a harmonious language that can be read viscerally, symbolically and *with feeling* from one work to the next: George Rouy's work at the eye of the storm, in breach of meaning, continues - delimiting canvas, disrupting substance, disquieting ideas.