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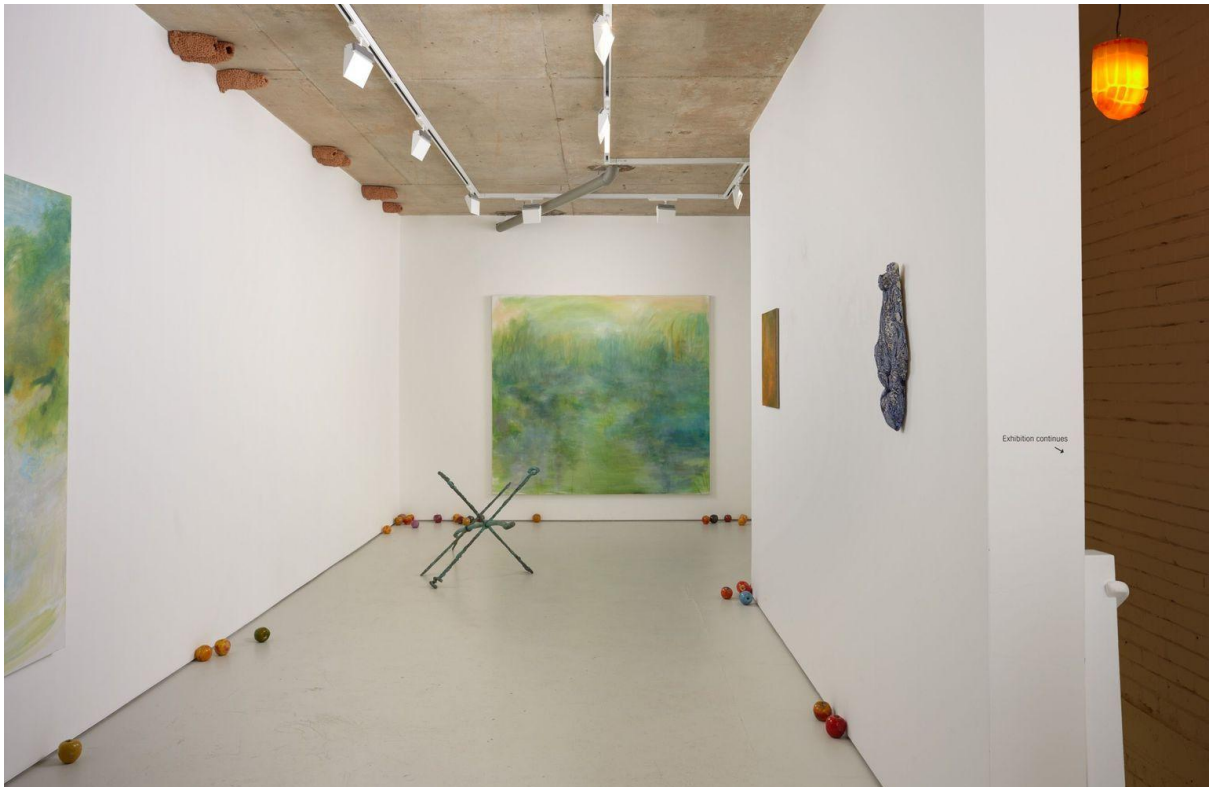
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'Alice Amati Introduces Rike Driescher and Zoe Koke to London'

By Rory Mitchell

London, 3 November 2023

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Advisory Perspective

Alice Amati Introduces Rike Driescher and Zoe Koke to London

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Alice Amati opened her first gallery six months ago on Warren Street next door to a pub and it has quickly become a go-to space in London for discovering emerging artists.

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Her current exhibition, *The Serpent's Tail* (10 October–18 November 2023) presents Los Angeles-based Zoe Koke's landscape paintings in conversation with the German sculptor, Rike Droscher.



Exhibition view: Rike Droscher and Zoe Koke, *THE SERPENT'S TAIL*, London (10 October–18 November 2023).

Zoe Koke's atmospheric canvases embrace the idea of the sublime within the history of landscape painting through their expressive abstract style. Koke works amidst the grit of urban Los Angeles, which seeps into her practice to reveal images charged with an energy and dynamism akin to this environment.

A strong affinity to female painters working in the landscape emerges through speaking to Koke as she explains, 'I often think about the personal and spiritualised form of the landscape, and how it might be a very physical experience for the maker. The connection between spiritualism and art is evident in the works of female artists like Agnes Pelton and to some extent Agnes Martin, as well as Georgia O'Keeffe.'

Koke considers herself a steward of her paintings' individual needs. Each work has a unique set of requirements that emerge like a kind of language which shifts depending on the painting.

'I work on several things simultaneously and start to figure out which ones are speaking to each other, establishing a kind of dialogue and balance among them,' she says.

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Exhibition view: Rike Droescher and Zoe Koke, THE SERPENT'S TAIL, London (10 October–18 November 2023).

Although rooted in the landscape, it's Koke's skill as an abstract painter that really stands out as the viewer is immersed in swirling masses of colour. Varied brushstrokes activate the compositions and soft tones are often punctuated by richer hues that imbue the paintings with an alluring sense of depth. This pulls us into her canvases, but there is also a more frenzied fragility that keeps us at arms length.

Rike Droescher, primarily a ceramic sculptor, is interested in experimenting with the diverse qualities the medium offers. Particularly enticing is her collection of 100 polished ceramic apple sculptures, wonderfully scattered throughout the space from the floor to the shelves.

Revealing her interest in the subject, Droescher explains, 'Apples, despite their ordinary nature, hold significant symbolism and power. They have surrounded humans for centuries, featuring in various stories, from the biblical creation story to the golden apples in Greek mythology.'

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Exhibition view: Rike Droescher and Zoe Koke, THE SERPENT'S TAIL, London (10 October–18 November 2023).

Interested in how the apple always marks a turning point in these stories, Droescher playfully invites us to look at the ubiquitous fruit anew. Each apple's ceramic glaze glistens like the polished sheen of the fruit itself but it's the individual defects, marks, and varying tones of colour that really delight.

Droescher began her artistic journey with fashion. After pursuing a bachelor's degree in fashion she soon came to the realisation that her true passion lay not in fashion per se, but rather in the three-dimensional aspect of design and the way it intersects with the human body.

Light works hang above the staircase in the gallery, glowing like an organism in a sci-fi film. They were derived from knee pads and are representative of a body of work that she has been working on for the last year.

'I've also been busy with other elements related to things that protect us and the safety of spaces we create,' she explains. 'The design of the lamps is rooted in the concept of these padded protective objects.'

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Exhibition view: Rike Droscher and Zoe Koke, THE SERPENT'S TAIL, London (10 October–18 November 2023).

Wall-based ceramic sculptures that emerged from crumpled clothing recall Lynda Benglis formally, whilst the beautiful patination brings Ken Price to mind.

Both artists embrace the alchemy inherent to their mediums and hark back to a more mystical time when the bond between humanity and nature was less fraught.

Main image: Exhibition view: Rike Droscher and Zoe Koke, THE SERPENT'S TAIL, London (10 October–18 November 2023).