

*SURFACE ISSUES*

Coco Capitán, Reginald Sylvester II, Magda Skupinska

7 June- 15 August, 2017

Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai



*Debauchery in the Club*  
acrylic and oilstick on canvas  
79½ x 90in. (201.93 x 228.6cm.)  
Executed in 2017



*Marlboro in Carlyle' New York*  
23¾ x 35¾in. (60 x 90cm.)  
C-Type hand-printed  
Executed in 2014

Leila Heller Gallery, Dubai, is pleased to present *Surface Issues*, a group exhibition curated by Maximillian William, featuring new works by **Coco Capitán, Reginald Sylvester II and Magda Skupinska**. The exhibition will run from 7 June – 15 August. The opening reception will be held on 7 June, 8-9 pm at the gallery.

*Surface Issues* brings together a diverse group of contemporary artists, who in their singular manner, subtly articulate the power that art works have in simultaneously informing and misleading us, as well as concealing a deeper understanding of a meaning lying just beneath the *surface*. The works in the exhibition gesture past the image surface and invites the viewer to examine and engage with the cultural and political references loaded in artworks that allow them to serve as metaphors of bigger concepts and issues.

Anticipating many of the ideas addressed in this exhibition, Reginald Sylvester's practice is unique in its ability to infiltrate instinctively the façade of physical form and appearance, while allowing other truths and realities to surface. His spontaneous and dynamic approach creates distinct textures, forms, and colours that reveal his own signature style through orchestrated expressionistic brushstrokes. Beyond the complexity of its formal harmony lies a multivalent interpretation of issues including black identity and the digital age that are increasingly unveiled once the surface level of his recognizable style is put aside. Likewise, the sensory aspect in Magda Skupinska's works entices viewers to contemplate issues that on the surface don't seem apparent due to their alluring quality. She incorporates the "accidental" in aesthetics by exploring the life span, tangibility, and progression of degradable materials in order to conceptually reveal, as well as accentuate, growing concerns for

**MAXIMILLIAN WILLIAM**

the environment. Finally, Coco Capitán's images explore the imaginary possibilities of photography. With a celebrated background in fashion photography and well-known collaborations with Gucci among others, Capitán is aware of the persuasive power of imagery in shaping our perceptions and desires. On the surface her images are accessible, taken without premeditation, they reflect her interest in vernacular photography. Yet beneath the gloss of the photographic prints, Capitán's unique visual language challenges traditional means of representation. Probing the boundaries between reality and images, her spontaneous narratives challenge perceptions, all the while raising questions about herself and her role as an artist.

In the Dubai gallery's first guest-curated exhibition, Leila Heller mentions, "We are so thrilled to have Maximillian William bring such an ambitious exhibition to Dubai – one that introduces new artists and their practices to the region while inviting viewers to engage with them in relation to one another." Maximillian William said "I am very pleased to be showing *Surface Issues* in the UAE with Leila Heller. It is a privilege to be working with such an established dealer and one of the most prominent contemporary art spaces in Dubai."

The artists are each accompanied by texts from well-respected art connoisseurs analyzing the works. Sarah Horner (Curator, London) has written a text for Coco Capitán, Gianni Romano (Curator, Italy) for Reginald Sylvester II, and Alberto Rios de la Rosa (Curator at Fundación Casa Wabi) for Magda Skupinska.

Surface issues will run through 15 August. Reginald Sylvester II, Magda Skupinska and Coco Capitán will be present at the opening (tbc) reception on 7 June 2017, 8-9 pm.

For more information about the exhibition and the artists please contact Maximilian William [max@maxwilliam.co](mailto:max@maxwilliam.co) or Jolaine Frizzell, Leila Heller Gallery [jolaine@leilahellergallery.com](mailto:jolaine@leilahellergallery.com)

**NOTES TO EDITORS:**

**About Coco Capitán:**

Coco Capitán was born in Seville (Spain) in 1992. Based in London, she completed her MA Master of Fine Arts with honours in the field of Photography at the Royal College of Art, London, in 2016. Her art practice straddles the fine art and commercial art worlds, and includes photography, painting, and prose. She has produced editorial and commercial collaborations with Gucci, Paco Rabanne, Maison Margiela and her work has appeared in magazines including the New York Times Magazine, Dazed, M Le Monde, Document Journal, and Vogue. Most recently her show 'Enlightened Snobbism' took place at the Hotel Café Royal in collaboration with the Royal College of Art (London, 2016), as well as 'MPBM&C' held in the Photographers Gallery (London, 2015). She has been a guest speaker for Cambridge University Photographic Society (2016), a member of the Jury for Hyères Fashion &

Photography Festival (2016), and was awarded the Photographers Gallery FF+WE Prize (2015).

**About Magda Skupinska:**

Magda Skupinska was born in Warsaw (Poland) in 1991. Based in London, she completed her BA in Fine Art at London's Central St Martins, thereafter being accepted into the Royal College of Arts for a BA in Fine Art. At the heart of Skupinska's practice lies a conceptual and sensory dimension that investigates the tangible and fragile quality of organic materials. Her alluring use of natural and degradable materials such as spices and fruit, juxtaposed with traditional mediums, stimulate sensory experiences that encourage an engagement with the environmental issues caused by human activity. Skupinska has participated in residencies in Buenos Aires (*Future Narratives* curated by Juliana Gontijo, 2016) as well as Atlantic Center For The Arts (Florida 2017, under the guidance of Mc Arthur Fellow Joan Synder). Her solo exhibitions include, *Elements of Silence* (London 2015, Presented by Maximillian William) and DAMA Project (Turin, 2016).

**About Reginald Sylvester II:**

Reginald Sylvester II was born in Jacksonville (North Carolina) in 1987. He grew up in Oakland, California and attended the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, studying graphic design. Underpinning Sylvester's body of work is a visceral and commanding pictorial form that lies between abstraction and figuration. His oeuvre is manifested through an exuberant and expressive use of paint and charged colour palette, child like scribbles as well as tangled disembodied limbs- all laden with connotations that convey the addictive and obsessive elements inherent in the digitalized world. Sylvester has had numerous international solo exhibitions presented by Maximillian William and Pace Prints, New York. He recently has been the subject of a solo exhibition at the Fondazione Stelline (Milan 2017), where his work is also held in the Institution's public collection.

**About Maximilian William:**

Maximilian William is a 21<sup>st</sup> century nomadic gallerist and publisher. His international programme focuses on supporting and showing artists in distinct locations. Each exhibition space is carefully selected to suit the specific requirement of the artist. By not confining his gallery to any one particular site, Maximilian can meet his artists' individual needs for critical engagement and visibility, thus enabling the strongest possible impact of their work on the cultural scene.  
<http://www.maximillianwilliam.com/>

**About Leila Heller Gallery:**

Since its establishment over three decades ago, Leila Heller Gallery has gained worldwide recognition as a pioneer in promoting creative dialogue and exchange between Western artists and Middle Eastern, Central and Southeast Asian artists. Currently representing a diverse roster of Western and Middle Eastern artists, the

**MAXIMILLIAN WILLIAM**

gallery is also active in the American, European and Middle Eastern secondary art markets. Gallery artists have consistently participated in international museum exhibitions and biennials, and are included in leading institutional collections worldwide. In November 2015, Leila Heller Gallery opened its first international location in Dubai's Alserkal Avenue. At 14,000 square feet, the state of the art gallery features three exhibition spaces, making it the largest gallery in the UAE. Showcasing leading regional and international artists, many of whom will be presenting their work in the Middle East for the first time, the gallery is dedicated to supporting the evolving practice of established artists.