

ALTMAN SIEGEL

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Koak

Return to Feeling

March 5 – April 18, 2020

Opening reception: March 5th from 6-8 p.m.

Here we go

You will begin again, again and again, at the beginning

Return to Feeling

*And to feel myself, I have to feel where we touch
Because without that contact I am made all ways raw
There is no grounding rod for my loose lightning*

*What is to feel, to hurt, to touch?
There are no words that I could give you
Nothing skinless, if not raw*

*There is no part of me, if not me alone
And still, I am always defined within you*

Altman Siegel is pleased to announce *Return to Feeling*, an exhibition of new paintings and drawings by San Francisco based artist Koak. For her first solo exhibition with the gallery, Koak has scripted a powerful and elegant visual experience that evokes sensorial memory, specifically as it pertains to the phenomenon and consequence of touch. The artist's signature mastery of line rendering and her complex, layered relationship to comics, character development, and gender-normative aesthetic roles are presented through an impressive new body of work.

A central proposal of the work is the distinguishing experience of self-touch as opposed to touch from others, which is very different. Koak describes, "The question also exists about intention, a sudden curiosity to whether we understand the touch. If our reading of it aligns with the person touching. If it's safe. If it's loving. A touch on our own skin is all in the feeling, a touch from another is infinite in questions."

The exquisite technique Koak is known for allows her mark-making to appear beautifully effortless, but is in fact the result of a rare type of generous and hand-made master craftsmanship that operates here as yet another signifier for touch.

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The gallery's main space will house a series of paintings that focus on a central female figure, specifically articulated in each piece through mood and context, and bearing a set of repeating identifiers. Some of the figures could be described as vulnerable yet defensive, perhaps cautious, while others might present an invitation to connect: a warm, even flirtatious welcoming. Within *Moat* and *Bridge*, two mirroring portraits that were the first works created for the show the figures have been left as raw, dyed linen, while the background is sealed off with a thick layer of plaster—creating bodies that are conceptually and technically delicate. The figures operate with contrasting body language, a closed and open pose.

The second gallery will house a series of drawings and a sculptural bench. These works focus on the negotiation of touch between multiple figures, specifically how it communicates and correlates with trust. The legs of the bench, cast in bronze, are depictions of two right hands meeting together, different parties finding comfort in an agreed-upon exchange.

Koak (b. 1981) lives and works in San Francisco. Recent solo exhibitions include: *Holding Breath*, Union Pacific, London; *Breaking the Prairie*, Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles; *Seed for Planting*, Walden, Buenos Aires and *Bathers*, Alter Space, San Francisco. Recent and forthcoming group shows include *New Time: Art and Feminisms in the 21st Century*, Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive, Berkeley (forthcoming); *Palo Santo*, Ratio 3, San Francisco; *Liquid Dreams*, Ghebaly Gallery, Los Angeles; *American Fine Arts*, BBQLA at Cloaca, San Francisco; Condo, Et al. at Celaya Brothers, Mexico City; *You Are Who I Think You Are*, American Medium, New York City; and *Female Gaze*, Museum of Sex, New York City. Koak holds an MFA in Comics and an individualized BFA from the California College of the Arts.

For more information please contact the gallery at 415-576-9300 or info@altmansiegel.com