

Nour el Saleh: Underfoot

13 May - 2 July 2022

Opening Reception: 6-8pm Thursday 12 May



Edel Assanti is pleased to present *Underfoot*, a solo exhibition by Nour el Saleh. The exhibition contemplates life in the extremities deep below or high above ground level. Strategically eluding the notions of heaven and hell, the artist imaginatively tunnels hypothetical ecosystems that could exist at those magnitudes.

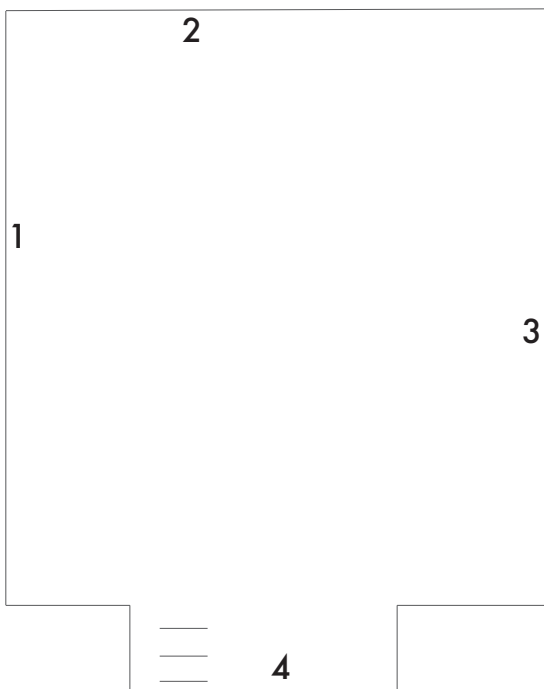
el Saleh's terrains seethe with hyper interconnectivity. Bodies, animal and human, indiscriminately meld into each other and are inseparable from the land they inhabit. In these dramatic 'nonscapes', where land burns and skies are livid, el Saleh draws on the genre of epic religious imagery traditionally employed to illustrate transcendent worlds of retribution or emancipation. Her images, however, avoid didacticism and can be considered open explorations of selfhood and all its facets.

The intertwined forms that characterise el Saleh's imagery can be read as composite fragments of the individual. Inspired by James Ensor's transgressive still lives, where morbidity and the carnivalesque collide, each work manifests the extreme multi-dimensionality of the self. Hybrid forms collude with each other, other figures pull away from one another, some tryst; ultimately they are conjoined to reflect the artist's selective consciousness.

The extravagance of el Saleh's compositions is uplifted by the dynamism of her style. Paint can seem to hover on the surface. Across the works, the instability of these scenes is acute: lurid pools of fluid swell, skin is translucent and the ground is in a cycle of renewal. With accentuated features that blend youth and age, recalling Goya's grotesque, her forms are implicated in these morphoses. These fantastical worlds can be invasively personal for both viewer and el Saleh.

Nour el Saleh (born 1997, Lebanon) completed her postgraduate degree from The Royal Drawing School in 2022. She has recently exhibited at Cassina Projects, Italy (2022); V.O Curations, UK (2021); Lowell Ryan Projects, Mexico (2020); Kuva Gallery, Finland (2019); Daniel Benjamin Gallery, London (2018). In 2022 she will be in residence at Castello San Basilio, Italy and Palazzo Monti, Italy. El Saleh lives and works in London.

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1. *Underfoot*, 2022, Oil and oil pastels on canvas
145 x 220 cm, 57 1/8 x 86 5/8 in.

2. *Aggressive Camouflage*, 2022, Oil and oil
pastels on canvas, 225 x 315 cm, 88 5/8 x 124
1/8 in.

3. *Until She Dries Up*, 2022, Oil and oil pastels on
canvas, 220 x 160 cm, 86 5/8 x 63 in.

4. *A Synthetic Flower for the Stunning Lady with
the Sinusitis*, 2022, Oil on canvas, 25 x 25 cm, 9
7/8 x 9 7/8 in.