

CHATEAUSHATTO

ZEINAB SALEH

Softest place (on earth) [Extended mix]

Opening January 22, 2022
12–6pm

Château Shatto is delighted to present Zeinab Saleh's first solo exhibition at the gallery, *Softest place (on earth) [Extended mix]*. The exhibition will open on Saturday, January 22, 2022, and remain on view through February 26. *Softest place (on earth) [Extended mix]* follows the artist's recent exhibition *Softest place (on earth)* at Camden Art Centre and marks Saleh's first solo exhibition in the United States.

Zeinab Saleh moves charcoal, chalk and acrylic across paper and canvas, her gestures oriented towards the affective states of emotion and mood. In Saleh's work, emotive dispositions are suffused in tone and shade; sonic material refracted through gesture; and observational studies softened into phantasmic forms. Through this consummation of form and concern, Saleh's works settle as gathering sites for observation, memory and expository rumination.

With *Softest place (on earth) [Extended mix]*, Saleh's references present as holding points within murky pools of phenomena. Fields of monochromatic hue are swept with chalk and charcoal, atomized materials that appear to connect tenuously to their surface support. These gossamer marks express an overall epistemological consideration of 'softness': beyond a quality or attribute, Saleh dictates softness as a temperament and way of relating to one's environment.* The parenthetical '(on earth)' in the title of the exhibition suggests that there's a further extension of softness in other realms.

Both diffuse and concise, the imagery within Saleh's work is primarily rendered in charcoal, using the material's latent susceptibility to transmit the sensorial artifacts of Saleh's source material, which is predominantly video and memory. Mediated through methods of painting and drawing, these works resist allegiance to the distinctions of either discipline, opting instead for a fluid, dialectical exchange between the two. This roving quality is advanced further through Saleh's haptic engagement with her substrates: sweeping gestures with brushes – used in both additive and subtractive capacities – create a palimpsestic index of Saleh's autogenic process, encompassing and making evident the work's own making. Each canvas magnetizes minutiae, inevitably settling as a record of facility and restraint alike.

Evident in the title of *Softest place (on earth) [Extended mix]* is a syntactic structure relocated from music and poetry into the format of exhibition – the works on view are comprised of those recently exhibited at Camden Art Centre, paired with newly realized canvases that extend the lines of inquiry which had emerged within their predecessors. Placed together here, *Softest place (on earth) [Extended mix]* becomes a site of progression and crescendo akin to that of a score or album. In turn, Saleh endows the format of exhibition-making with a sense of duration, linearity and accumulation.

This propositivity towards the sonic is extended throughout the compositions of individual works. Arabesque motifs, forms and textures are animated with a rhythmic musicality, their constituting marks resonating with the movement of a conductor or passage of sound frequency. These works flutter with vibrational qualities, suggesting the forces which exist beyond perceptibility, yet continually exert influence and persuasion over the happenings and encounters of everyday life.

*Momtaza Mehri, File Note 136: Zeinab Saleh, Camden Art Centre, 2021.

Zeinab Saleh (b. 1996, Kenya) lives and works in London. Recent solo presentations include *Softest place (on earth)*, Camden Art Centre (2021) and *Frieze New York, Frame* (2021). In 2020, Saleh's work was exhibited in a two-artist presentation with Yuko Mohri at *mother's tankstation* in collaboration with Château Shatto as part of CONDO, London. Additionally, Saleh's work has been exhibited at UCL Art Museum, London; Karma International, Zurich; and MAMOTH, London.

In 2017, Saleh co-founded Muslim Sisterhood, an artist collective that focuses on activism and creative output, including the production of publications, panels, photo series and workshops. Her work is part of the permanent collection of the Start Museum, Shanghai.