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# CHARLIE SMITH LONDON

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Wednesday-Saturday 11am-6pm or by appointment

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## EMMA BENNETT

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### Volcano Lovers

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PRIVATE VIEW      Thursday 17 October 6:30-8:30pm

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EXHIBITION DATES      Friday 18 October – Saturday 16 November 2019

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GALLERY HOURS      Wednesday-Saturday 11am-6pm or by appointment

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'It's the mouth of a volcano. Yes, mouth; and lava tongue. A body, a monstrous living body, both male and female. It emits, ejects. It is also an interior, an abyss. Something alive, that can die. Something inert that becomes agitated, now and then. Existing only intermittently. A constant menace. If predictable, usually not predicted. Capricious, untameable, malodorous.' Susan Sontag

CHARLIE SMITH LONDON is delighted to present Emma Bennett's 'Volcano Lovers'. Known for her exquisite paintings where she sets still life, game, interior and other elements against monochromatic black grounds, Bennett introduces us to an entirely new and dominant motif in this exhibition.

In recent years Bennett's work has increasingly explored the uncanny by juxtaposing seemingly incongruous elements within the black void. Leading on from Susan Sontag's philosophical novel 'The Volcano Lover' (1992), Bennett inexplicably interweaves the volcano as motif alongside her traditional elements, amplifying the sense of cognitive dissonance further.

There is, however, a defiant internal logic within these paintings. Fruit, flowers, game, burning fires are of course memento mori. They are fulsome and life affirming but are fleeting, reminding us of the ephemeral nature of life. Bennett adopts the volcano as memento mori, but also acknowledges its threat which is, again, life affirming:

'I'm interested in volcanoes as both givers and takers of life. Life evolves out of volcanoes and it enriches the earth...it provides fertile abundance. And therefore, people set up their homes in close proximity to the volcano where the land is rich and plentiful. In Naples, Mount Vesuvius looms over the city as a constant reminder of what might happen. Yet people live here and Naples buzzes with the excitement of that danger.'

By adopting volcanoes as her core subject Bennett's paintings shift emphasis from still life to landscape and the volcanic harbinger takes its place as a contemporary symbol of the sublime. Its overwhelming physicality and menace induce awe and wonder. By combining the volcano with her ongoing motifs Bennett utilizes it as, again in Sontag's words, a 'visible metaphor for uncontrollable forces – of love, violence, of burgeoning revolution'. We might justifiably add beauty, brutality, fear and desire.

Please contact gallery for images and further information

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