Stephen Ongpin Fine Art



Lavinia HARRINGTON (1986 -)

yes risk joy

Pastel and pencil on handmade Khadi paper.

Signed Lavinia in pencil on the verso and titled yes risk joy in pencil on the verso.

770 x 1981 mm. (30 1/4 x 78 in.)

This monumental pastel work, nearly two metres in length, was completed in February 2023. As the artist, Lavinia Harrington, has remarked, she began the piece ‘by working on the floor – moving on and across the paper – folding and unfolding it a number of times in the process. [The] selection of pastels [and] colour palette…resonated with particular emotional and physical sensations I hoped to grapple with and explore and overlapping ‘colour’ sensory experiences when listening to music. [The] action of making the piece evolved over the course of the end of January and February – working with timed sessions, often determined by the length of Dvorak’s music [Antonín Dvořák, Symphony No.9 in E Minor (Op.95)] – whether I listened to it all through once or multiple cycles of it back to back…My work is not illustrating a poem or piece of music, but I’ve noticed there are a series of poems and musical pieces as well as particular works that I will return to again and again over a particular arc of time and over the course of making a series of pieces.’

The title of this large pastel, 'yes risk joy', is taken from Louise Glück’s poem Snowdrops. Other poems which inspired Harrington in the making of this work include Birdwings and The Guest House by Rumi and What if this road by Sheenagh Pugh.

Artist description:

An Italian-British artist, Lavinia Harrington received her MFA in Painting at the Slade School of Fine Art in London with a Distinction in 2024. She graduated from Oxford University with a degree in the History of Art in 2008, and two years later gained her MA degree at the Courtauld Institute of Art. She has fifteen years of experience working in arts education; delivering public talks for the National Gallery in London and teaching in museums, galleries and schools across the United Kingdom and Italy. In 2013 and 2014 Harrington worked at Stephen Ongpin Fine Art, where she helped to mount an exhibition of 18th, 19th and 20th century pastels. (As she noted in an interview several years later, ‘I was drawn to pastels as a medium after handing one [of] Joan Mitchell’s breathtaking drawings in the gallery I worked for back in 2014.’) In 2022 she took part in the group show I Felt That - a collaborative, care-centered project addressing the gender pain gap - at The Tub, an artist-run project space in Hackney in London. More recently, Harrington’s work was included in the group shows Somewhere In Between at the Hew Hood Gallery and Lost for Words at the Patrick Heide Gallery, both in London. In 2024 she was shortlisted for the Chadwell Award and the same year was awarded the Audrey Wykeham Prize for

Painting at the Slade, while in 2025 she was shortlisted for the CASS Art Main Prize. Harrington lives and works in London.

Harrington's grounding in the history of art, as a student, scholar and teacher, has had a profound impact on her work. As the artist has said, 'having specialized in the Italian Renaissance, I've spent most of my academic and professional career looking predominantly at artworks by white western male artists. Over time, I've filled boxes and boxes with postcards, magazine cuttings and all sorts of images I collected whilst teaching abroad…I feel very fortunate to have had the opportunity to engage with artworks first hand on such a regular basis – it's certainly helped me to also build up an imaginary library of images to draw upon, whether consciously or unconsciously whilst I work…But, it's been my focus on women artists that has felt most empowering in terms of developing my own practice. I was drawn to pastels as a medium after handling one [of] Joan Mitchell's breathtaking drawings in the gallery I worked for back in 2014. My recent pilgrimage to see her sensational exhibition in Baltimore was nothing short of lifechanging…I find the immediacy and intimacy of works on paper and embroidery really appealing, particularly works by Sophie Taeuber-Arp, Helen Frankenthaler, Louise Bourgeois, Jenny Saville, Rachel Jones and Joana Choumali.'