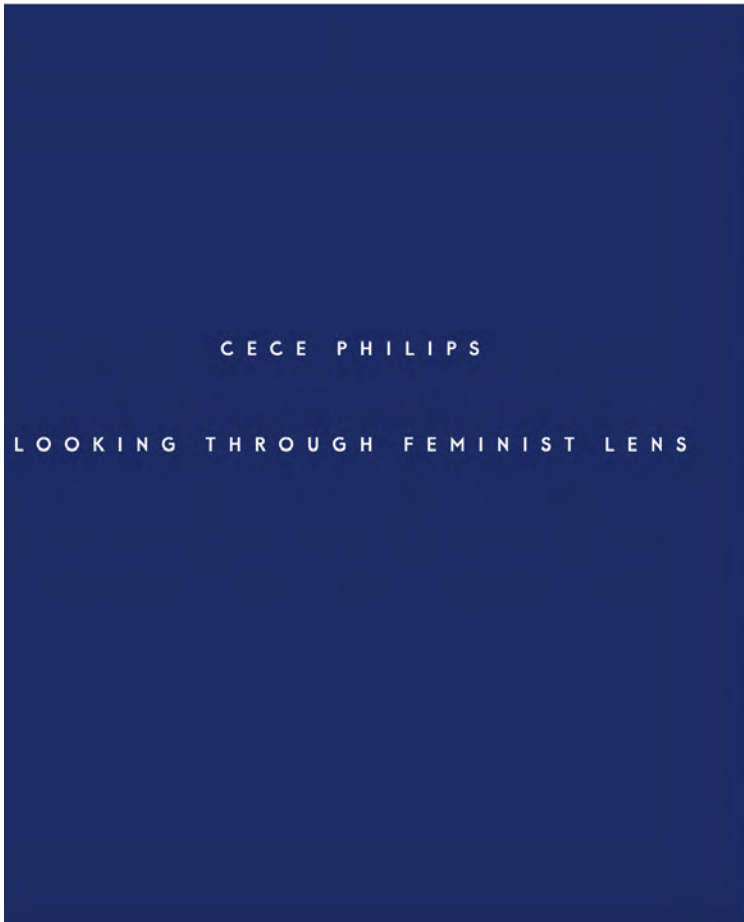


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Cece Philips' biggest inspiration has always been her father, who taught her to draw and took her to exhibitions and museums in London. Having worked in an advertising agency for 2 years before making the decision to dedicate herself fully to painting, the young artist now presents *The Night has a Thousand Eyes*, her first exhibition with Peres Projects at the Berlin gallery. Open to the public until November 11, in her latest work she looks at the story of modernity, but through a feminist lens. She immerses us in a curious, darkening cosmopolis where space, gender roles and racial dynamics are reimagined.

She now answers us from Los Angeles, where she has traveled on the occasion of her participation in a touring exhibition of ten women artists which celebrates the 250th anniversary of Veuve Clicquot. But beyond continuing to develop her path in this type of collective projects, the creative consolidates her individual work with the new exhibition that is now hosted by Peres Projects, in which she delves into some of the most recurrent themes in her painting that have become her differential factor. "I'm particularly interested in the language of womanhood and subverting traditional representations of both women's position in art and society," she tells us. We talk to her.

Could you briefly introduce yourself to our readers? Where do you answer us from?

I'm a painter based in London and I currently have a show, *The Night has a Thousand Eyes*, running at Peres Projects in Berlin. I'm writing these answers from LA – I'm here briefly for a travelling group exhibition, *Solaire Culture!*

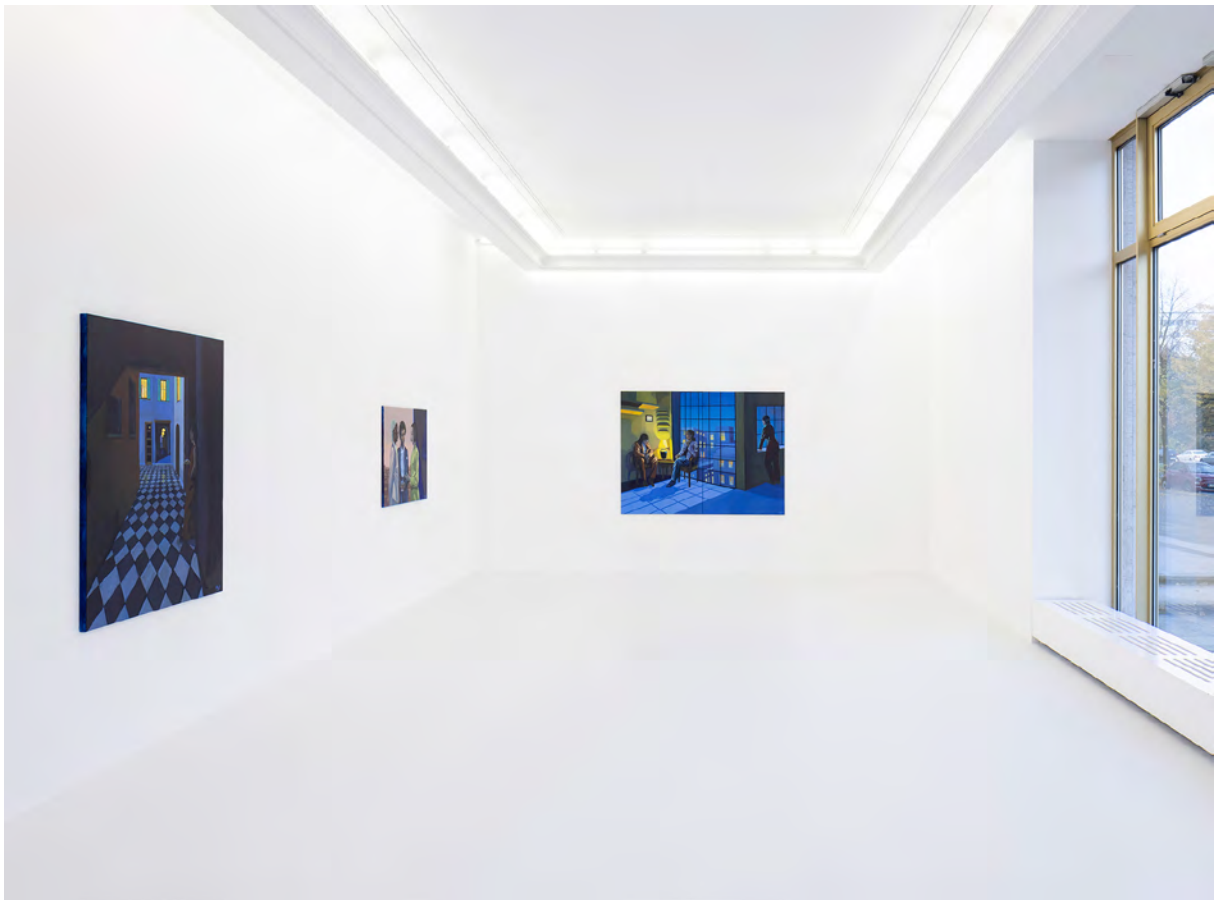
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I've read that you used to work in advertising, is this true? At what point did you change your professional course and start to put your energy into art?

I worked at an advertising agency for a couple of years before the pandemic, but when I had the extra time to paint in lockdown I realised very quickly it was something I wanted to do full-time. I always had, I'd just never had the courage before.

And when and how did your first approach to painting take place? Would you say that you have grown up in a creative circle, are there any artists in your family?

I can't remember when I first started painting, but luckily I was encouraged to draw and paint from a young age. My dad taught me how to draw and would always take me out for days at museums or just out and about around London. He was definitely my biggest influence, and at that younger age, I can really recall looking at his drawings (which would be much better than mine) and kicking myself for not being able to draw as well as him, so then practising even more.



In 2021 you presented your debut solo exhibition at Home, London. How was this experience and what did it mean for you?

I feel very blessed to have been able to have my first show at a space like Home. Ronan McKenzie has created an incredibly thoughtful space which puts in place practices that truly support, predominantly Black, artists. The curation of events also means it's more than a gallery; it's also a hub, a community.

Since then, you've had solo shows at ADA Contemporary Art Gallery in Accra (Ghana) and Post Gallery in Zurich (Switzerland). And also group exhibitions, including Ojiri Gallery and Gillian Jason Gallery, both in London. What do these experiences bring in your personal and professional life? Have they let you get real feedback from the audience?

Being able to be part of group shows has been a really important part of my experience as an artist. To be able

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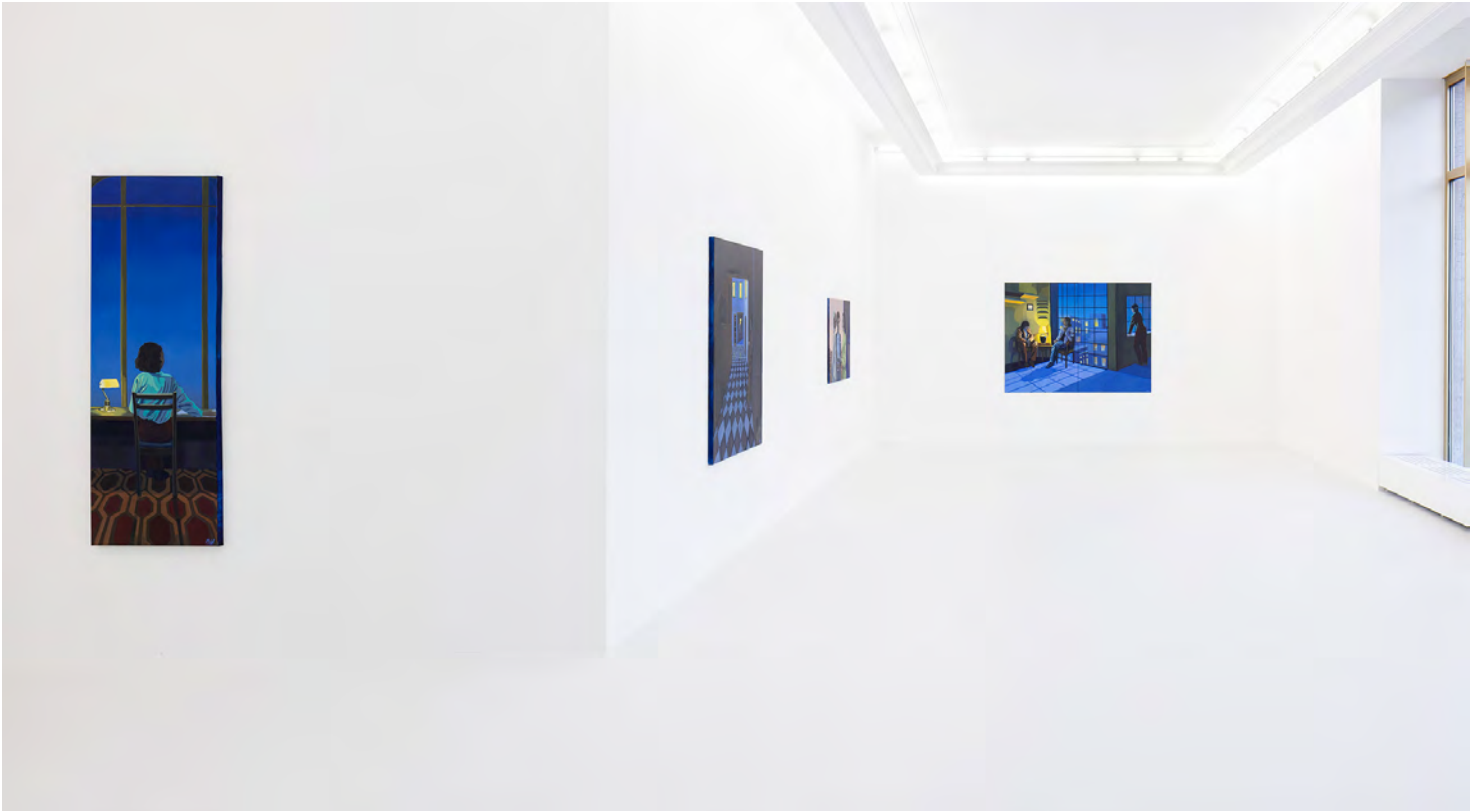
to engage with the work of others, form friendships, and develop dialogues and collaborations with other artists (and curators and gallerists) has been invaluable.

You're currently exhibiting in Veuve Clicquot's global travelling group exhibition *Solaire Culture*, right? What can you tell us about this?

Veuve Clicquot is celebrating its 250th anniversary this year with a touring exhibition of 10 women artists. The show is to celebrate the life of Madame Clicquot, who grew the house into a successful international business it is at a time when women weren't even allowed to own businesses (the only exception being widows which 'Veuve' translates to). It's been incredible to exhibit alongside artists I've admired for years.

There is no doubt that you have entered the world of art through the front door. Now you're presenting *The Night has a Thousand Eyes*, your first exhibition with Peres Projects at the Berlin gallery. If you had to describe this new work in one sentence, what would it be?

A curious, darkening cosmopolis where space, gender roles and racial dynamics are reimagined.



Is art a mechanism to question everything we take for granted, to criticize those aspects of society that we don't like?

It certainly can be. As a figurative painter, you're constantly looking at others, whether that's through imagery, in passing, or within your own paintings. Lucy (who wrote the texts to accompany the works) and I spoke about the idea of the 'flâneur,' who was historically a man, a gentleman, who roamed the city observing others. Traditionally, women in art have routinely been depicted by and for the gaze of men. Criticism can come in the form of being able to explore and subvert that through the paintings. As a viewer, you're even more conscious of the fact that you are a viewer when it's through the frame of a window.

In the paintings that make up *The Night has a Thousand Eyes*, all the characters we see are women, primarily Black women. Why?

Initially, when I started painting more seriously, it was from people I knew, models in life drawing classes, or figures I'd come across in found images and old photographs. However, that developed into painting more from

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imagination, continuing to use and reference historical imagery and re-imagine it through colour and a female lens. I'm particularly interested in the language of womanhood and subverting traditional representations of both women's position in art and society.

This exhibition inevitably leads us to the almost nostalgic reflexive situations that Edward Hopper used to capture, or to Alphonse Osbert's blue-tinged atmosphere. Who are your main references and what pictorial movements are your favourites?

I love the way Alphonse Osbert used colour and blue in particular. Looking at his work, I've been exploring how one colour can be applied in many different ways, experimenting with achieving harmony and a balance of tones to create a certain atmosphere.

Is it difficult to be a woman in the art scene? Do you think we are moving in the right direction in terms of the representation and visibility of female talent?

There are so many incredible women artists that inspire me, both past and present, and I think that representation has changed a huge amount in recent years. I'm currently reading *The Story of Art Without Men* by Katy Hessel, which is just one great example of how the visibility and representation of female artists are changing for the better.

You have collaborated with playwright Lucy McIlgorm on an accompanying booklet including poetry, prose and dialogues between characters, haven't you?

These works felt very storied, and I wanted to use text to accompany this show to add another layer of intrigue. Lucy is an incredibly talented playwright, so I asked her if she'd consider writing something for the show. The process was collaborative, but also I wanted her to have a lot of freedom with it. She came to the studio and sat with the works, before responding to them with a mixture of poetry, prose, and dialogue.

And what can you tell us about your next projects?

I'm really looking forward to the year ahead. I have a couple of group shows coming up this winter, and then hopefully some exciting new things with Peres next year!