

The Luminescent

Wednesday, 6 June 2018

The Lotus Within | Olivia Fraser Exhibition

Breathe, Olivia Fraser (2016).

Stone pigment and Arabic gum on handmade Sanganer paper.
91.5 x 91.5 cm (36 x 36 in).

THE LOTUS WITHIN | OLIVIA FRASER EXHIBITION

6 - 26 June 2018

Grosvenor Gallery

35 Bury Street London SW1Y 6AY

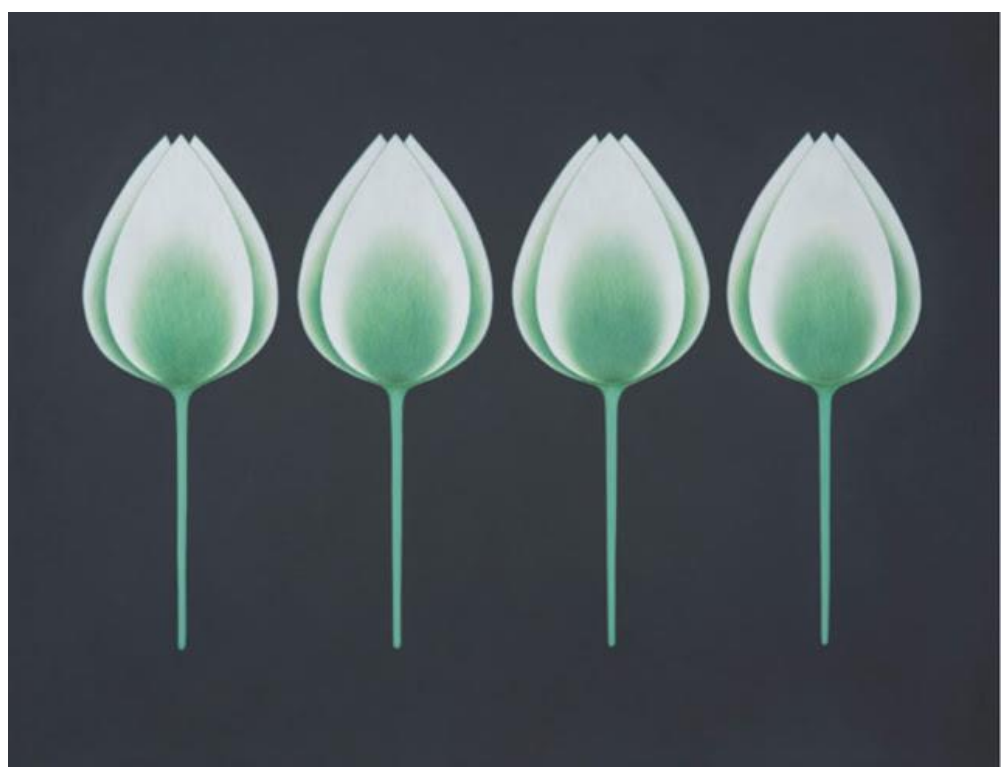
Artist Olivia Fraser writes:

I have drawn on tradition in a variety of ways all of which are linked to the symbol of the lotus as the archetypal icon of yoga used as a tool for visualization with its association with perfection, renunciation and spiritual growth. In different paintings I pull the lotus apart, deconstructing it, iterating it, expanding and contracting it, unravelling it, isolating it into icons both large and small, exploring its association with colour and with the senses and its connection to the ground and the cosmos and to Indian philosophy and poetry. I am concerned with inner landscapes rather than external ones, so the majority of my works are painted or enclosed within a square format reflecting the idea of a mandala with its associations of energized space and meditation.



Frazer describes the above work as follows:

I have been reading the *Gheranda Samhita* a recently translated early C18th Sanskrit text on yoga and the sevenfold pathway to perfection. There is a wonderful bit in the section on Dhyana where the yogi is told to visualize an ocean of nectar in the middle of which there is “an island of jewels” on which, amongst groves of *kadamba* trees, there are seven scented flowers “perfuming every quarter.” Having learnt a very visual form of yoga with colourful visualizations using imagery culled from the garden - flowers, trees, animals, etc. used as tools for meditation, I was intrigued and excited to learn about scent also being a focus for meditation. Along with the expected various forms of jasmine the *sthalpadma* flower was one of the seven mentioned perfumed flowers. Translated as “land lotus,” some sources say that it changes colour during the course of the day. Traditional Indian scents are oil based and, when applied to the skin, the perfumes amplify and intensify reflecting the body’s temperature over the course of a day. I am interested in exploring visually the idea of an ever-increasing scent, the essence of a lotus, reflected in an ever increasing saturation of the colour pink.



Pause II, Olivia Fraser (2016).
Stone pigment and Arabic gum on handmade Sanganer paper.
71.1 x 91.4 cm (28 x 36 in).

I was rather intrigued by this extract from an early C18th Sanskrit text called the *Gheranda Samhita*:

“Through breath - control the yogi gets the ability to move in the ether; through breath control diseases are destroyed; through breath control the goddess (Shakti) is awakened; through breath - control the mind enters the supramental state. Bliss arises in the mind and the practitioner of breath - control becomes happy.”

In this painting [above] I focus on exploring the idea of stillness, breath and time using the icon of the paired down, closed lotus.

The show at the [Grosvenor Gallery](#) is the first time this specific yogic imagery has been seen in London. Robert Macfarlane comments on the exhibition as follows:

Pinwheels and starbursts, constellations and soul - maps, slow unfurlings and rich pulsations: Fraser’s work somehow possesses at once a calm grace and a hallucinatory intensity. She practices what Glenn Lowry, director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York, has called “elaboration by simplification... they are no longer details magnified but details transformed”. The result is a hugely powerful body of work that – to quote again from The Gheranda Samhita – “puts the self in space and space in the self.”

The complete [exhibition catalogue](#) is available online for preview.