





# **/'meɪkɫɹ/**

Roberto Ekholm, Sally Kindberg  
and Dillwyn Smith

Curated by Sally Kindberg

MOCA London

3 October - 2 November



/ˈmeɪklɪp/

Chests puffed proud, spacemen stand looking upwards to survey the alien terrain ahead of them. Circular mirrors, where their faces should be, tilt up to reflect a partial view of a desolate landscape. It's a horizon not of this time or place but it's lit up by what appears to be a moonrise.

Or, at least, this is how I recall Sally Kindberg's *Turtles on the Beach*, 2019, from memory. Later, casting an eye over the painting again, I see that I've imagined the contents of the painting very differently to how they actually are. While the pair of torsos are humanoid in form, I note that where I'd remembered the muscle of upper bodies, surfaces which seemed hard and complete, they are not what they seemed to be. In my mind's eye, I'd been too quick to attribute life force and gender to the baseless shapes of the empty green turtle-neck sweaters. The title wasn't lying of course, but this phantasmic quality is disorienting. If not filled by flesh and blood, then are these sweaters worn by mannequins or kept afloat through some kind of supernatural force, some errant act of sorcery?

An astronaut's helmet with a visor made of reflective glass would have certainly and conveniently resolved the narrative I'd spun. Still, how did I read intergalactic conquest from the pose of empty garments? Are those mirrors at all? Maybe they're windows, or portals to another dimension or planet. Did I make it all up? Have I been seeing things? Did I remember a reflection where there isn't one, simply because I craved for an image that made more sense? Was it all a trick of the light?

Having completely misread subjectivity into the objects of Kindberg's painting, I'm prompted to think about how her so much of her work tends to be a magnet for projection. Illuminating the present, the past and the imagined, these paintings connect threads of art history with the imagery of contemporary culture, like time- capsules laden with visions of worlds gone askew.

For *meɪklɪp*, Kindberg continues this sticky accumulation of contexts, viewpoints, and subject matter gathered from around the artist and the space of MOCA itself. Hovering above the books on the bookcase within the gallery, the unorthodox hang of her paintings is a reflection upon the space and the source material of the books themselves. The body of work created for *meɪklɪp* conjures images of old mistresses, peculiar fashions, mundane moments, and catalogues of hardware that, at one brief moment in time, were fecund promises of futurity before their inevitable obsolescence. For Kindberg, though, it is light (whether that is Earthly,



divine, technological, or just the material matter itself, demonstrated by the characteristics of the pigments themselves) that animates these paintings. Solid forms are held together in a flat yet 3D jigsaw fashion, using colours that crackle and glow - gory blood reds, laser-beam oranges, stun-gun blues, ectoplasm greens - giving the images a looming spectral power. Her subjects are not so much set back into their backgrounds or horizons, but shrouded to the point of encroachment to create impossible perspectives. This effect showcases what is possible in paint, and it is this fascination that fuels Kindberg's interest in the complexities of what paint can do. *Μεικλαρ*'s curatorial impulse, however, is to delve into matters man-made or made up, to look at how artists approach meaning-making through distinctly material practices.

Deriving some semblance of order through its title in the phonetic spelling of the noun and verb of 'makeup', these artists come together for *μεικλαρ* to explore a shared interest in processes structural, linguistic or diagrammatical. Less a coverup or concealment of flaws, this approximation of what could be meant to 'make up' is an announcement of expression and divinatory prowess in the face of the rampant appetite and flattening culture of objectification. Broadly speaking, to 'make up' could well be a set of actions, beyond mere production and consumption, that move a state of individual parts or conceptual ideas, through to completion or objecthood, to literally create form, or maybe, hopefully, even transcend it altogether.

While Sally Kindberg's surreal paintings fuse the fantastical and the banal, similar tensions exist in Dillwyn Smith's structures, where the materiality of diaphanous fabrics, stitched and joined across stretchers, is loaded with the gravity of reverent meaning and personal significance. In *Turning Poison into Medicine*, 2018, for instance, Smith's attention to the tenets of homeopathy and other alternative healing modalities frames his practice as a feat that is part-engineering, part-witchcraft, and as wrought through a sustained focus on the alchemical qualities of painting and colour. Smith's works might seem to escape the messy crassness of corporeality, but they are imbued with a vibrational presence which could be as psychic as it is physical. Invoking liminal ritual spaces and spirituality, these interventions with natural light riff on the symbolism of points of entry, passage, transgression and transformation; veils, robes, flags, doors and windows. Taking in the traditional methods of saturating and glazing colour to manipulate light and line, Smith's work is in dialogue with a history of geometric abstractionism, and particularly with the work of Mark Rothko. Continuing in this vein, Smith develops certain ideas from recent works influenced by place (namely a residency in Oman followed by another in Rothko's birthplace in Latvia), to create new work which





spotlights MOCA's unique architecture and dual identity as both a cultural hub and a home. Smith's specific treatment of the street-facing glass windows in the space observes the timeline of day and night, where the work *Suffragette*, 2019, and the exhibition itself, is impacted by light filtering through the fabric panels against the glass, intensifying or muting colours, depending upon the quality of the daylight and the elements outside the building. This temporal approach to the space is of a sensibility of letting go, rather than making up, leaving daylight to colour the gallery space, and honouring the ephemeral nature of our days.

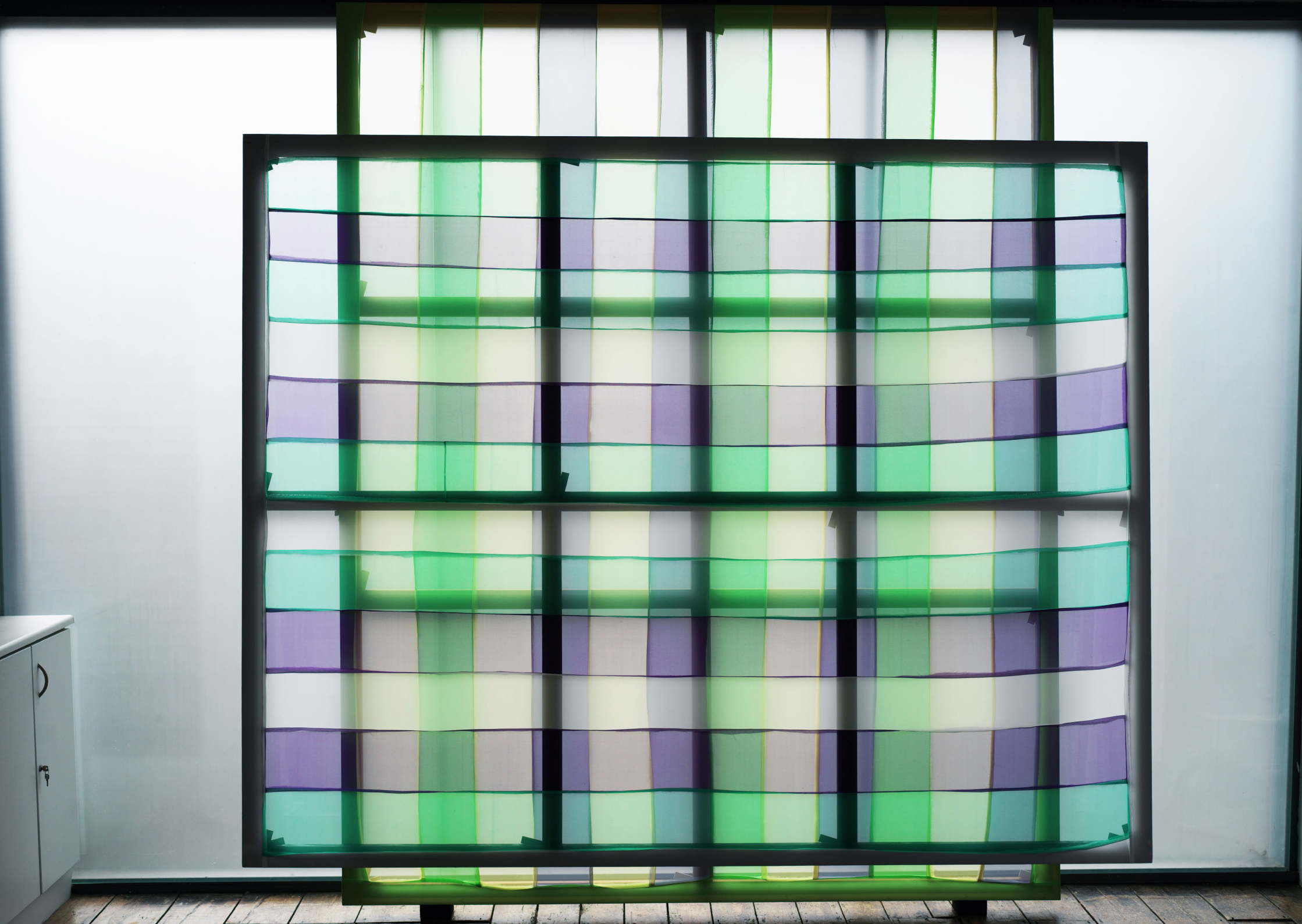
Smith's use of the frequencies of colour to communicate the relational distance of intimacy is shared by Ekholm's poetic sculptures. In tune with Smith's regard for the subtleties of light and colour, Ekholm's work also considers similar possibilities of healing, restoration and redemption. Using fitness equipment as a means to look at the construction of identity through repetition and stamina, Ekholm strips objects such as medicine balls, yoga mats and weights of their original context by using colours which may allude to new meanings. Retaining a form and materiality to stand in for the body as a performance of self, these newly repurposed objects bring our attention to the myriad ways in which our relationship to our bodies can change throughout our lifetimes.

Recalling a minimalist aesthetic, *Adonis (Leather, Carmine, Atomic Red)*, 2018, sees barbell weights hung on the walls of MOCA to gain a quiet meditative power and a sexual subtext in gentle homage to the work of Felix Gonzales-Torres. In this form, relieved of functionality, these objects are seemingly at rest, and yet they are tied to an energetic register and performative language, of fitness instruction especially, where viscerally evocative prompts to "GRIT YOUR TEETH!" and reminders that "THIS IS MIND OVER MATTER!" could easily translate to the breaking and building of creative muscle and the stamina requisite to an artistic life. These catalytic scripts to see things through to the very end need the magic of belief to work, like spells or hypnotism, to break through a point of physical exhaustion, since dealing the final blow to "FINISH WHAT YOU STARTED!", can be, often times, the hardest thing of all. Looking at *Adonis*, I remember words reverberating, urging me to keep going, go harder, be faster, like incantations, or a pavlovian reflex. These motivational barks, usually towards the end of my weights class, are directed at me. When I appear to be about to drop a rep and ground my weights, my instructor makes eye contact. "STAY WITH IT... FINISH IT!"

If "RECOVERY!... IS... WHERE... YOU... GET... STRONGER!!", according to my instructor and all of the sports psychology mantras, then what happens when life happens, illness strikes, love leaves or our loved ones die? Struck mute and thrown













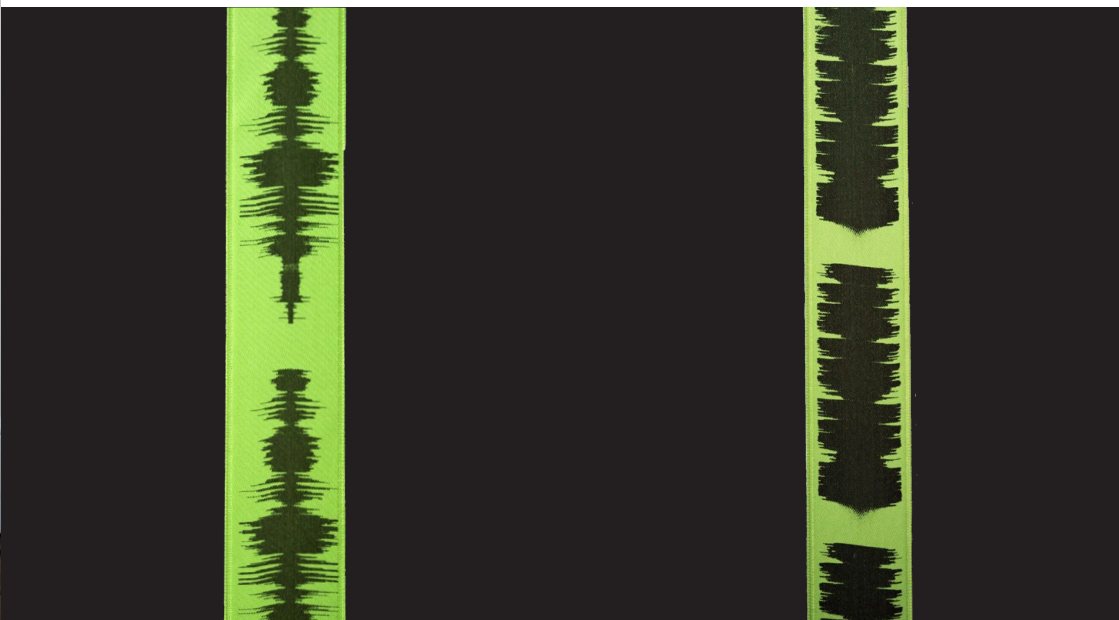


into darkness by body blows of grief, when paralysed by events and language has seemed to abandon us - where do we go from there?

*Somatic!* The unavoidable alacrity, monumentalises the paradox of grieving as something simultaneously life-shattering and yet somehow galvanising. In this instance, Ekholm's own experience of grief following the death of his mother is a cycle of parts, in verse and chorus, at once communal and intensely personal, but never fully articulable.

In light of the painful inadequacies of verbalising grief and trauma, this sculptural piece utilises the physical movement of the artist's performance work to show sound waves as printed motifs, transcribing the dance piece, *Mother's Kitchen (Momento)*, 2019, Ekholm made to mark the time and place of his mother's passing, along with Sufjan Steven's song, *Death With Dignity*, which was written along similar lines. Sound refashioned as print adorns the yoga mats and ribbons made to fit the dimensions of MOCA's gallery space, bringing substance and voice to unspeakable loss.

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**Anna Ricciardi**









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**Page 3:** Top to bottom: Sally Kindberg, *On*, 2019, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 76 cm and *Turtles on the Beach*, 2019, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 76 cm

**Page 5:** Top to bottom: Sally Kindberg, *Lady Connected*, 2019, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 76 cm and *Parallel Rondell*, 2019, oil on canvas, 91.5 x 76 cm

**Page 7:** Roberto Ekholm, *Supine<sup>1</sup> / Fresnel equations*, 2019, silicon rubber, pigment, stainless steel polished mirror sphere, 110 x 55 cm

**Page 8-9:** Dillwyn Smith, *Suffragette*, 2019, diptych, shou sugi ban, stretchers, nylons, horizontal 244 x 306 cm, vertical 306 x 244 cm, overall 306 x 306 cm

**Page 10:** Top left: Sally Kindberg, *Red*, 2018, oil on canvas, 35 x 45 cm

**Page 12-13:** Roberto Ekholm, *Somatic<sup>1</sup> / The unavoidable alacrity*, 2019, satin ribbons, ink, nuts and bolts, brass, pvc, 300 x 61 cm

**Front and back cover:** Dillwyn Smith, *Suffragette*, 2019, details

**Inside front cover:** Sally Kindberg, *Parallel Rondell*, 2019, details

**Inside Back cover:** Roberto Ekholm, *Adonis (Leather, Carmine, Atomic red)*, 2018, steel, Little Green matt emulsion and oil paint, 20 x 20 x 20 cm

All install images by MOCA London

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