

GEORGIA SPAIN

Why Not, What If, Could It Be?



Georgia Spain
A Stammer in the Speech 2024
oil on linen
198 x 183 cm

Winner of the 2021 Sir John Sulman Prize, Georgia Spain, makes her debut in the medium of sculpture, bringing together paintings alongside sculptural assemblages.

Embracing ambiguity, humour and material transformation, Spain's surreal, semi-figurative sculptures look as though they might have just stepped out of the vigorously expressive canvases that surround them.



Georgia Spain
The Sleeve 2024
mixed media
including cotton and
polyester fabric, stockings,
glove, stuffing, thread,
canvas, ceramic,
cardboard, steel
167 x 50 x 50 cm

In a way they have, for they are comprised of an assortment of found in Spain's studio, including the very materials – rags, can of wood and other objects – used to make the many layers of marks in each painting.

The process began when Spain was in the middle of painting and found herself nursing a strong desire “to get off the flat surface of the canvas”.

“I just started making these strange forms with no idea of what they were going to look like,” says Spain. “I was using bits of cardboard and then I

brought my sewing machine in. I thought maybe I can sew some pieces together."

The sculptures reach, touch, contract and contort in a variety of attitudes. Some appear comical, absurd or defeated; others defiant, even heroic.



Georgia Spain
The Reach 2024
mixed media
including cotton and polyester
fabric, feathers, stockings, glove,
thread, hessian, stuffing,
cardboard, steel
158 x 64 x 64cm

"I think they've kind of 'grown themselves' in the same way the paintings have," says Spain. "They have evolved very naturally to sit in that space between figurative and abstract."

Given their presence and totemic power, it's tempting to read the sculptures as self-portraits.

"I see them as characters that have stepped out of the paintings and joined me in the studio, but they are all, in some way, me, or like my experience of being in the world," says Spain.

Some of the sculptures even contain remnants of Spain's old clothing.

"I had a jumper, wore it around the house, then it became a studio jumper, then a rag, and now it has become part of a sculpture," she says.

Movements and gestures made by figural presences in the paintings are echoed in the sculptures – or is it the other way around?

"The sculptures are really all about the hand and the mark, in the same way the paintings are," says Spain. "As I've been making them, I've noticed different gestures emerge. There's a lot of reaching. I see the hand reaching as a gesture of almost getting at something, but I also like that idea of the hand signaling, 'Here I am, just making myself known'."

As the exhibition title suggests, Spain has privileged play and possibility in the making of this body of work, and she hopes each painting and sculpture will be receptive to a range of interpretations.

"These works might be about drama, or anguish or pain," she says. "But they also could be about joy and ecstasy. Or some people read them almost as sexual, or in an erotic way."

As she was constructing the sculptures, Spain felt a need to "piece things together, pull things together – maybe there's something around wanting to mend or repair the world, but it's also a desire to hold things in".

"In a way, the works feel like they hold all the different emotional states that I've been experiencing while making them," says Spain.