

Kelli Thompson

Full Bloom

February 9 – March 12, 2023

Opening reception February 9th, 6-8 pm

Shelter is pleased to announce Kelli Thompson's debut solo exhibition with the gallery, *Full Bloom*.

Using distinctly feminine anatomy paired with the sexual organs of flora, Thompson explores aspects of her physical existence as a woman. The result is paintings that are intensely personal while also, through the lack of distinctive characteristics, universal; the work functions as a reference to all women's bodies and the botanical elements act as extensions of them. Acknowledging sexuality, while falling short of revering sexual beauty, the artist's goal is not to highlight sexuality in femininity but to emphasize the visceral discomfort which often accompanies a woman's physical experiences.

By separating and isolating parts of the figure, Thompson points to the way in which the treatment of the body based on definitive female functions often serves to define the woman as a whole. In doing so, she addresses the guilt, fear, anxiety, and profound unknown when being confronted with the limitations of physicality. Yet the work itself is not meant to manifest anxiety for the artist or the viewer; Thompson shows tremendous appreciation and compassion for the female body through the loving, and often obsessive, rendering of her subjects.

Recalling popular color palettes from her childhood, Thompson utilizes painted gradients created from multiple layers, blending until every mark is eliminated. This technique mimics digital fabrication, despite working solely within the boundaries of oil paint, a substrate, and the hand. This pristine level of finish places the artist's work in dialogue with the historical tradition of realism within portraiture and still life painting, yet the juxtaposition of these subjects against abstracted formal elements situate them in a wholly fictional, artificial space. Through this process, Thompson is able to both highlight and re-contextualize realism.