

Ryan Driscoll,
Press

The Art Newspaper, 2021

Three exhibitions to see in London this weekend

From a historical group show of works from 1960s Italy to David Harrison's trans pagan goats

KABIR JHALA and LOUISA BUCK

7th May 2021 16:35 BST

Ryan Driscoll: Holst [↗](#)

Until 24 May; Soft Opening, 6 Minerva Street, E2 9EH

In this recent series of seven oil-on-wood works, the Northamptonshire-based painter Ryan Driscoll responds to Gustav Holst's *The Planets* orchestral suite (1914-1916) in unexpected and emotive ways. Here Driscoll, who typically queers Greco-Roman subjects, taps into popular mythology and science fiction to depict each planet of the solar system through his distinctive, gorgeous style that formally evokes Mannerist tradition while interrogating ideas of beauty, fear and power within the Classical world.

In each scene, Driscoll upends Holst's interpretative slant—through which the composer captured each celestial body with a fixed "human" emotion, such as joy or gloom—into something more mutable and unsettled. In *Venus*, a sensuous curved spine recalls the taut-backed nudes of Italian Renaissance painter Luca Signorelli but introduces an element of uncertainty via the figure's androgyny. In *Neptune*, colourful flames enrobe a lone figure as a beam of light shines down from what appears to be a hazy UFO. Crucially however, these works remain more reverential than critical of their source material, as in their poetic symbolism and tonal disparity they adhere to *The Planets* formal structure, which is often described as a series of "mood pictures".

AnOther, 2021

Ten Brilliant Exhibitions to See as London Reopens

As restrictions ease, a selection of exhibitions for your art-starved eyes

APRIL 26, 2021

TEXT Lara Johnson-Wheeler



Ryan Driscoll, *Venus*, 2020

Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography by Theo Christelis

Ryan Driscoll: *Holst* at Soft Opening, 6 Minerva Street, London: Until May 22, 2021

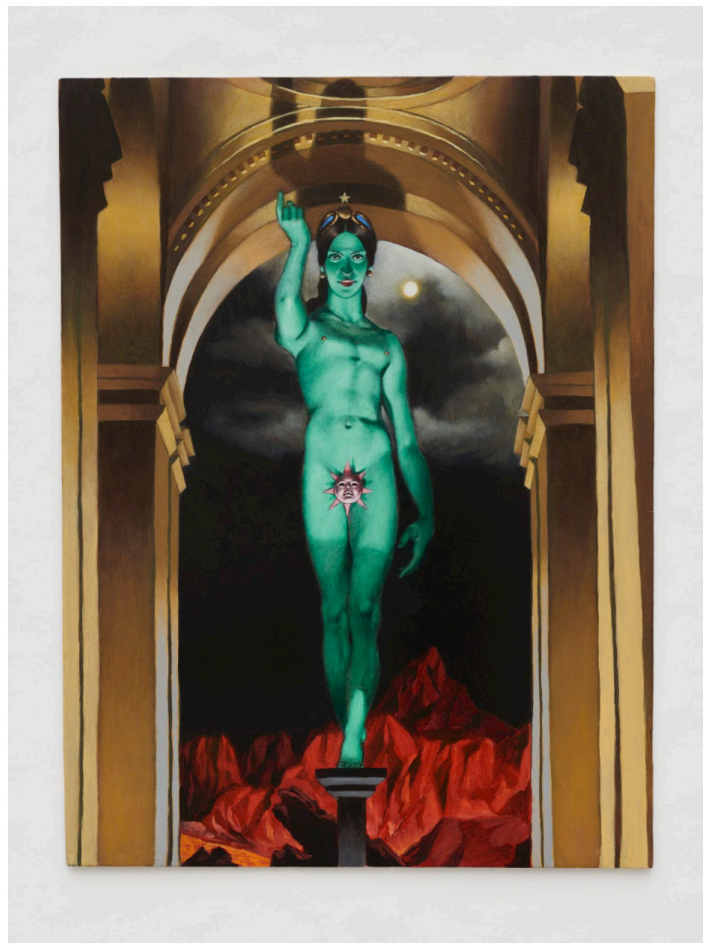
Ryan Driscoll presents seven large oil on wood paintings at Soft Opening's Bethnal Green space. The artist uses mythical imagery – see the two-headed horse, the lightning pierced clouds – to represent his interpretation of English composer Gustav Holst's *The Planets*. The muscular curve of a youthful back in front of a luscious blue curtain in *Venus* (2020) is indicative of the artist's non-binary revision of the classical nude or traditional landscape.

artnet, 2021

9 Gallery Shows to See Now in London, From a Spotlight on Young French Painters to Rachel Whiteread at Gagosian

Here's all the great stuff you won't want to miss this spring. Just remember to wear your mask and social distance!

Naomi Rea, April 14, 2021



Ryan Driscoll, *Uranus* (2020). Courtesy the artist and Soft Opening, London. Photography Theo Christelis.

Ryan Driscoll has created a series of oil-on-wood paintings responding to the English composer Gustav Holst's early 20th-century seven-movement orchestral suite, "The Planets." Each movement of the suite is named after a planet of the solar system and its corresponding astrological character. Rendered as enigmatic and romantic characters or landscapes, Driscoll's interpretations are infused with queer sensuality and androgyny, giving a refreshing injection of queer energy into classical subjects.

"Ryan Driscoll: Holst," Soft Opening, 6 Minerva Street, London

LOVE, 2020

FEATURES

FROM TO-WATCH LISTS TO ESSENTIAL READS: CONSIDER THIS YOUR MANUAL FOR THE NEW NORMAL

4 SEP 2020

Words by BEN PERDUE

What follows is a cultural guide to help you navigate the post-pandemic landscape. Featuring essential reads, to-watch lists and expert voices on subjects from neopagan raves to erotic supernatural, these pages are designed to facilitate your recalibration for the world v2. Consider it a manual for your new everyday.

Craftwork: Ryan Driscoll paints the Weird Sisters not as crones on a desolate heath but as classical beauties in an idyllic rural landscape. They represent the truth, and showing that truth properly, not just the rise, fall and death of Macbeth as they appear in the play. Witches recast as powerful feminist symbols, not vice versa for once, and 'probably the most enigmatic characters of the Shakespearian canon,' he says. 'While they are perceived as dark, mysterious creatures of evil, they actually stand in the mist on the outside of the action as witnesses and storytellers who conjure the story of the evil and point out injustices as performed by the characters in the play.' Just one example of how Driscoll's romantic interpretations of mythological and literary narratives test the relationship between fantasy and reality, allowing him to bring his borderless non-binary storytelling to life.



LOVE DIARIES
CREDIT: RYAN DRISCOLL

It's Nice That, 2019



Ryan Driscoll's portraits of mythological figures reflect on his Queer experiences

Words Daphne Milner

10 September 2019

Artist Ryan Driscoll's elegant, Renaissance-inspired portraits of mythical figures have enchanted many — the painter worked on a T-shirt for Loverboy's collaborative line with Topshop as part of their Pride collection and was commissioned to design the backdrop for the Shrimps AW19 catwalk. Ryan, who is currently based in the British town of Corby, graduated with a BA in Fine Art from Camberwell College of Art in 2016. Yet, his interest in art started long before this. "When I was a child, I visited the National Gallery for the first time and saw the walls filled with the work of all these dead artists. It struck me that their paintings were still drawing viewers in, which made me realise that painting could communicate with others forever," Ryan tells us. "The piece that really transformed my understanding of painting was Bronzino's *An Allegory with Venus and Cupid*. I was perplexed by it because of the sinister and confusing beauty of these icy white corpses bathed in ultramarine."

It's Nice That, 2019

Ryan's art primarily centres on Greek and Roman mythology. From Dionysus, to Icarus and Medusa, the artist repeatedly interrogates the relationship between the fantastical and the real through his work. For Ryan, it is the universality but also the enchantment and fluidity of mythological storytelling that sees him reimagining it to tell his own tales. "I use myths to allegorically communicate my own thoughts and queer ideas of beauty, love, death and the non-binary androgynous body. Symbolism allows the viewer to interpret the work in whichever way they choose. Plus the Greeks were pretty queer so it helps — most of the gods were involved in queer affairs or tragedies at some point." Alongside his mythological influences, Ryan also draws inspiration from Biblical myths, Shakespeare, traditional Scottish and Irish ballads and even twentieth century literature such as the work of J.G. Ballard.

Ryan's creative process often begins with abstract ideas. First off, he reflects on what he hopes to communicate through his paintings and how best to do so through various compositions. "My drawings are basic to begin with — mainly directional lines and sweeping curves in order for me to develop a composition that feels just right," the artist explains. After careful editing, "the drawings become more refined and are consequently transferred to the final surface I've chosen, which is usually a wooden board. I then layer my oils in thinly, working only on top of dry paint. I seem to spend more time waiting for paint to dry than doing actual painting."

Considering the immaculate precision and thoughtful construction of his paintings, it is unsurprising that Ryan has a number of various references from which he draws aesthetic inspiration. These include paintings by Bronzino and Pontormo's *Deposition from the Cross* and *Visitation* as well as Cindy Sherman's *Untitled* film stills, Federico Fellini's *Guilietta deli Spiriti* and the films of Powell and Pressburger like *Black Narcissus*. Ryan's rich reference pool is reflected in the care he puts into his paintings and looking to the future, he will continue to create work that is true to his lived experience; albeit with a fantastical twist. He goes on to say: "Currently I'm making drawings that evoke an emotional response from me. But these take time to develop. It's important to me that my art both reflects and explores my queer experience."

i-D, 2019

the goddesses walked among us at shrimps autumn/winter 19


Baby's first fashion show!

By [Frankie Dunn](#) | 20 February 2019, 3:45pm

For autumn/winter 19, Hannah Weiland looked to the heavens, gently ushering the gods and goddesses of Ancient Greek mythology through a [Shrimps](#)-shaped portal and out into a subterranean showspace in central London. These were the beings responsible for inspiring so much of art, literature, culture. The original muses. Clearly captivated, History of Art graduate Hannah turned their stories into a stunning collection for Shrimps' debut show.


As far as backdrops go, the huge-scale watercolour fresco by London artist [Ryan Driscoll](#) (who sat front and centre along with Helena Bonham Carter and previous Shrimps collaborator [Faye Wei Wei](#)) was divine. Depicting the likes of "Gaea – Goddess of Earth, Amphitrite – Goddess of the Sea, Athena – Goddess of Wisdom and Culture, and Venus – Goddess of Love," figures reclined on the rocks, ruling over the seas and skies. They brandished branches, wreaths, tridents, hay bundles and harps, wearing constellation crowns and a whole rainbow of colours. "But how is it so bright?" somebody asked the [Camberwell](#) grad on instagram. "Just layer and layer as much paint as you can until there is more pigment than paper," Ryan replied. A similar method taken by Hannah, we imagine, who seemed to layer colours on colours and patterns on patterns to her heart's content.

i-D, 2019







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The watercolour piece i made for the backdrop of @shrimps first runway

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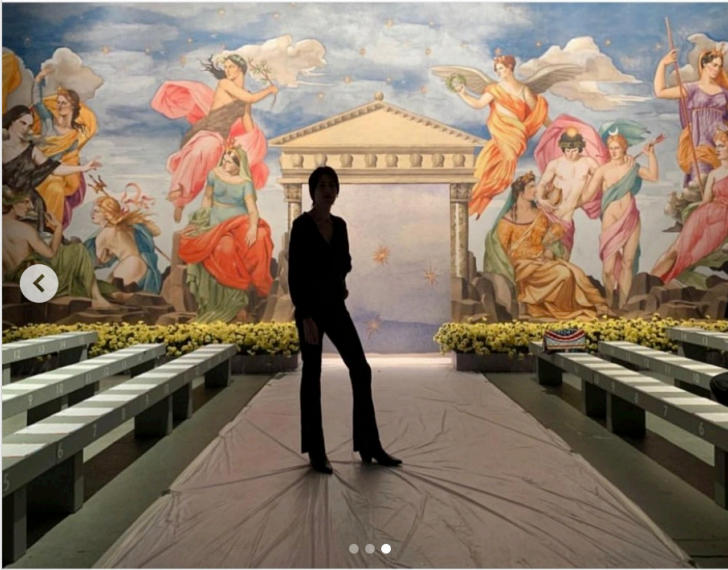


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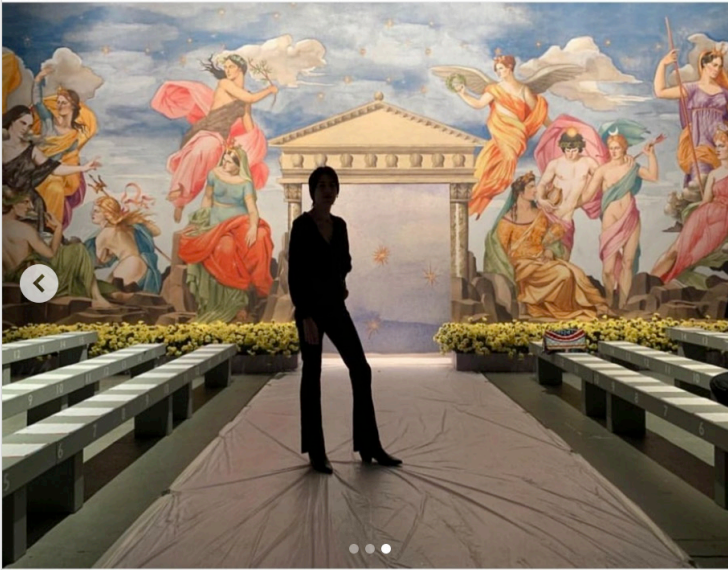


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