



Gwen Evans: CIPHER

Fri 7 Apr – Sun 11 Jun 2023. Granada Foundation Galleries 1 & 2.

CIPHER makes voyeurs of its viewers; cryptic domestic narratives frame subjects in private states of exchange, isolation, and contemplation. By painting human relationships, and the thick and suspenseful atmospheres that surround them, Gwen Evans highlights the uneasiness and paralysis of contemporary and social anxieties.

The works presented depict subjects whose narrative, gender, and time period refuse to be fixed, and though prevented from knowing their identities, you're invited to assume their relationship to one another. In *Obverse* and *Inverse*, a young couple pose in profile, a nod to the art historical genre of the marriage diptych. Evans successfully captures the stoicism of this painting tradition; such paintings were, first and foremost, formal announcements of contractually (and divinely) bound individuals. In *Offering*, too, romance falls short. The gesture of the carnation – a symbol of love – hangs in the air, unreciprocated. The foremost figure looks out to us, unaware of the looming shadow waiting in the wings.

This work is indicative of all those on display; charged with dramatic suspense and radiating narrative ambiguity, they force us to ask: Who are these people? Where are they? And *when* are they from? Even in paintings with accompanying figures, the subjects are condemned to remain suspended in their perpetual isolation, whether that's introspectively disengaged from the other figure, or physically separated by walls or curtains.

All the while, Evans sensitively conjures spaces of quiet, uneasy intimacy. Seeming domestic, wallpaper-clad interior backgrounds are persistently flat spaces devoid of depth. Even in *Mute Point*, green-tinged walls and curtains that suggest knowable interiors don't reassure us that these anxious figures are home. Despite being witness to these private exchanges (a literal lifting of the curtain), apparent motives or meanings, like the shadowy figure, remain concealed.

About Gwen Evans

Gwen Evans (b. 1996, Wales) lives in Liverpool and works in Manchester. In 2022 she was awarded the Granada Foundation Gallery award after exhibiting in the HOME Open. She graduated with a BA in Fine Art from the Manchester School of Art in 2018. Exhibitions include: *Open*, The Royal Cambrian Academy, Conwy (2021), *Talking Sense*, Portico Library, Manchester (2021), *Contemporary Young Artist Award*, The Biscuit Factory, Newcastle (2020), *Wales Contemporary*, Waterfront Gallery, Pembrokeshire, (2020), *Y Lle Celf*, The Senate, Welsh Assembly Building, Cardiff.

www.gwenevans.co.uk

Manchester Open Prize Winner

Gwen Evans received the Granada Foundation Gallery Exhibition Award at the Manchester Open Awards in 2022 for her work '*Portrait of a Woman*'.

The Manchester Open exhibition, is HOME's award-winning biennial open call exhibition celebrating creative talent across Greater Manchester.

Works Available For Sale

All artwork in the exhibition is for sale, if you are interested in purchasing artwork from this exhibition, please contact visualart@homemcr.org.

Thank you / Credits

With thanks to Katie Evans for assisting in writing the essay and gallery guide and to the Torevell family for their ongoing support.

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