



Spike Island

LUCY STEIN
WET ROOM

25 SEPTEMBER 2021
TO 16 JANUARY 2022

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Obsessive, unashamedly emotional and loaded with a strong psychological charge, Lucy Stein's work incorporates a heady mixture of styles and references. Weaving together personal experiences with feminist and psychoanalytic theory, mythology and religion, her drawings, paintings and installations draw upon the concept of the 'female gaze' to question the representation of women in art history. Since moving to St Just, Cornwall in 2015, Stein has become deeply involved in the history and folkloric traditions of the Cornish landscape.

Wet Room is inspired by the fougou: narrow Neolithic underground passages unique to West Cornwall that lead to womb-like chambers. Highly valued by the goddess culture that thrives in the region, they have become sacred sites of worship. Echoing the ritual rebirthing ceremonies believed to have taken place within these uterine caverns, Stein's central installation comprises a bathtub and a sink with running taps. The surrounding tiled walls have been hand-painted with underwater scenes relating to her study of western esoteric traditions.

Alongside this installation, Stein presents a series of new paintings and drawings. Made during her second pregnancy and throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, these works reflect on a period of intensive domestic caregiving and anxiety. They combine Greek mythology, esoteric culture, and ecclesiastical and medieval imagery with vibrant tableaux that depict a wide range of western female archetypes. Populated by romantic allusions and unexpected juxtapositions, they share a raw quality, where quick, expressive brushstrokes and areas of intensive reworking reveal Stein's changing moods and compulsive approach to making.

Loaded with wittiness and humour, the works in the exhibition cast a critical and feminist eye over the esoteric culture that thrives in West Cornwall. They explore how women's recourse to magical practices and ritual forms of expression pose a challenge to the many different clichés and stereotypes that have shaped the female psyche for decades.

Image: Lucy Stein, *Jung in PZ* (2020) (detail). Acrylic, Oil, charcoal, sennelier pastel and oil stick on canvas, 240 × 180cm. Courtesy the artist and Gregor Staiger, Zurich. Photograph by Steve Tanner

Wet Room is part of the West of England Visual Arts Alliance programme, supported by Arts Council England. Following its presentation at Spike Island, the exhibition tours to the De La Warr Pavilion in Bexhill-on-Sea in Spring 2022

Large print and audio guides are available in the gallery and to download at spikeisland.org.uk

Spike Island is an international centre for the development of contemporary art, located in Bristol's harbour area.

Admission to the gallery is free.
Join our events and activities online.

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