

# The Guardian

**Jessie Makinson's Furry Darkness: a carnivalesque party**  
by Skye Sherwin  
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The British artist paints a tantalisingly drama in an eerie landscape – a space for dreaming and reimagining.



▲ Jessie Makinson's Furry Darkness, 2020. Photograph: Courtesy the artist and Fabian Lang Gallery, Zurich

## Tail spin ...

Perhaps the strangest detail in the young British artist Jessie Makinson's new painting of semi-naked hirsute dudes with patterned skins and hybrid animal familiars is that they have tails extending above their rear ends. One curves round to become a wayward phallus and, like medieval depictions of the serpent in Eden, sprouts an angry head – yikes.

### **World of interiors ...**

Makinson's fantastical surrealism suggests a number of art historical precedents. The off-kilter interiors and eerie landscape that artists such as Edward Burra took from Piero della Francesca; the psychic self-involvement of the figures in Balthus's early street scenes; his cats. In part, this gives the painting its anxious atmosphere, but the vibe is playful, too.

### **Motley crew ...**

There is an intriguing collision of nature and artifice, naked bodies and dressing up. Leopard spots decorate one figure. A leg ends in a 70s flare and high-heeled shoe. Long locks are threaded with daisies. A Fu Manchu moustache looks ostentatiously fake. It's a carnivalesque party, where roles are levelled and the world remade.

### **Animal magic ...**

Makinson's earlier paintings of androgynous women in forests raised questions around identity and eco-politics. Here, beasts – fantastical and otherwise – sit companionably on palms and shoulders and seem on an equal footing with their human peers. Male bodies have plenty of traditionally feminine clefts and curves.

### **Me, myself and I ...**

Jung said that everything in a dream refers to our own psyche. The men are a gang, but they're also isolated, casting pensive glances at no one in particular. Each of them seems equally important. In fact, they could even be the same figure caught up in different stories.

### **Dream on, dreamer ...**

To forge her works' sense of dream illogic, Makinson begins with an abstract painting from which the figures emerge, without planning. Why is the robed man solemnly climbing into a cauldron? What strange music is the reclining nude playing? The painting's various dramas are tantalisingly obscure, a space for dreaming and reimagining.

*Included in I See You, Victoria Miro on the Vortic Collect app, to 4 July*